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The Rise

of the

British Dominion in India

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By SIR ALFRED LYALL

K.C.B., D.C.L.

'L'Angleterre, cette puissance diffuse'

HENRI MARTIN

LONDON

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THE RISE OF THE BRITISH DOMINION IN INDIA

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*** These Maps are not intended to exhibit accurately the topography of Indian places or provinces. They are merely coloured so as to show approximately the actual extent of the British Possessions at different periods.

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THE RISE OF THE BRITISH DOMINION IN INDIA.

INTRODUCTION.

THE narrative of the acquisition of British India forms no more than an episode in the annals of the English nation. It is therefore not unnatural that historians, being mainly intent upon European affairs, should be usually satisfied with treating the foundation by an English trading company of a great Oriental empire as a marvellous and almost incomprehensible stroke of national good fortune. To those, however, who follow carefully the course and connexion of events that led up to this magnificent result, and who bear in mind that foreign commerce is the life-blood of a maritime people, that for two centuries, at least, the whole policy of England has been mainly directed towards the increase of her sea-power and the enlargement of her foreign commerce—insomuch that, as Sir H. Parnell said, almost all our wars during the eighteenth century were virtually waged on behalf of that commerce—the fact that India has been the great prize of continuous success in naval war and

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trading adventure will not appear astonishing, and certainly not inexplicable. The object of this short treatise is not only to give a concise account of the rise of British dominion in India, but also to explain it by tracing rapidly the causes and convergent influences that brought about so remarkable a conclusion.

It is a matter of general remark that Anglo-Indian history, when related at length, is tedious and confusing. This is partly due to unfamiliarity with outlandish names and places; but chiefly to its essential character. The history, like the annals of almost all Oriental States, is mainly concerned, up to very recent times, with military operations, which in India seldom rise above the level of desultory fighting, and with that class of politics that consist largely of revolts, conspiracies, dynastic contests, and the ordinary incidents of a struggle for existence among rival despots. In Asia there is no scope for examining the growth of institutions or the development of civil polity or the forming of nations; the famous men are all either able tyrants (in the Greek sense) or successful men of war; the type of civilization is uniform and stationary; the spirit of nationality, where it exists, is in its most elementary stage; the people of the great kingdoms known to history are an immense mixed multitude, broken up into tribal or religious groups, and united under one rulership by force or accident. At the present moment every great country in Asia is governed by an

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alien race or foreign dynasty; there is no general identity of language or of religion between the rulers and the mass of their subjects; they accordingly accept changes of government with indifference; they have no inveterate antipathy to the domination of foreigners. The Indian people were, from the beginning, so far from objecting to the English dominion in India that they co-operated willingly in promoting it.

Nevertheless the existing relations between India and England constitute a political situation unprecedented in the world's history. The two countries are far distant from each other, in different continents; they present the strongest contrasts of race and religion. There is no previous example of the acquisition and successful government of such a dependency, so immense in extent and population, at such a distance from the central power. A State that is distinctly superior to its neighbours in the arts of war and government has often expanded into a great empire. In Europe the Romans once united under an extensive dominion and still wider ascendancy a number of subject provinces, client kingdoms, protected allies, races and tribes, by a system of conquest and an administrative organization that anticipated in many salient features our methods of governing India. But the Roman dominions were compact and well knit together by solid communications. The Romans were masters of the whole Mediterranean littoral, and their capital, whether at Rome or Constantinople, held a central and commanding position. Then at the present time we see Russia holding down Northern Europe with one foot, and Central Asia with the other. She is the first power that

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has succeeded so completely in throwing down the barriers which have hitherto divided the East from the West, as to found a colossal dominion in the heart of both continents. But with the Roman, Russian, and all other historical empires the mass of their territory has been accumulated by advancing step after step along the land from the central starting-point, making one foothold sure before another was taken, firmly placing one arch of the viaduct before another was thrown out, allowing no interruption of territorial coherence from the centre to the circumference. This was not so in the case of the Indian empire. During the time when the English were establishing their predominance in India, and long afterwards, England was separated from India by thousands of miles of sea; the Atlantic and Indian Oceans lay between. The government of the English in India may thus be said to present an unique instance of the dominion over an immense alien people in a distant country having been acquired entirely by gradual expansion from a base on the sea.

Of the political changes introduced during the last 150 years by the overflow of Europe into Asia, the acquisition of all India and Burmah by the English has hitherto been incomparably the greatest; although the steady advance of Russia, pushing forward her steel wedges into the central regions, is fraught with no less momentous import to the destinies of the Continent. But while Russia has been laboriously following the well-known and well-worn routes of conquest by land through the central steppes of Asia, the English have reached South Asia swiftly and

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securely by the open water-ways. And thus it has come to pass that, whereas all previous conquests of India have been made from the mountains southward to the sea, the English have acquired their dominion by an expansion from the sea northward to the mountains. It need hardly be observed that this very remarkable exploit could only have been performed by virtue of great naval strength and superiority.

In the following pages some attempt is made to sketch the preliminary events and predisposing conditions that attracted the maritime nations of Europe into the field of competition for predominance in India, and to explain the combination of direct effort and favourable circumstances to which England in the eighteenth century owed her success.

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CHAPTER I.

EARLY COMPETITION FOR INDIAN COMMERCE.

SECTION I. *Italy, Spain, and Portugal.*

FROM time immemorial the trade of Europe with the rich and productive countries of South-Eastern Asia, particularly with India and the islands of the Malay archipelago, has been the most lucrative branch of the world's commerce. It has been the object of fierce and persistent competition by sea and land among the more enterprising and civilized European States, of a contest that increased with the spirit of adventure and the desire for wealth; and it has made the fortune of every city or nation that has successively obtained the largest share of it. For nearly eighteen centuries[1], from the days of the Ptolemies almost until the Portuguese rounded the African Cape, Alexandria was an emporium and half-way station of the sea-borne trade. The Roman emperors spared no pains to monopolize the commercial navigation of the Red Sea; and their jealousy of the merchants of Palmyra, who were diverting the stream of Eastern traffic into an overland route from the Persian Gulf to Syria, is said to have been one reason why they destroyed

[1] Robertson, *Disquisition concerning Ancient India.*

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that flourishing city. It is true that when the Arab conquest had overflowed Egypt and Syria, Constantinople became for a time the chief storehouse of the Levant, and the main current of trade with India and China took the line across Central Asia to the Black Sea, avoiding the countries recently overrun by the Mahomedans. 'The commerce of Europe centred at Constantinople in the eighth and ninth centuries more completely than it has ever done since in any one city[1];' the Greek navy was the largest then in existence. But misrule, fiscal oppression, and foreign invasions, ruined the Byzantine empire. As Constantinople declined Venice and Genoa, the cities of the inland sea which lay beyond the desolating range of Asiatic conquest, rose into splendid prominence. They soon became the principal agents for the importation into Europe of the precious commodities of Asia; insomuch that in the fifteenth century the Venetians appeared literally to 'hold the gorgeous East in fee,' for they were not far from possessing the whole of this enormously profitable business.

At the end of that century two capital events in the annals of the world's commerce occurred suddenly, and almost simultaneously; the discovery of America and the doubling of the Cape of Good Hope. Their effect was to give vast extension to the sea-borne trade with Asia, to turn its main volume into new channels by opening out direct communication between South Asia and the countries bordering on the Atlantic; and to augment very greatly the supply of gold and silver for exchange

[1] Finlay, *Byzantine Empire*, 248.

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against Asiatic products. When the Pope Alexander Borgia issued his Bull dividing the whole undiscovered non-Christian world between Spain and Portugal, he awarded India to the latter power; whereupon the Portuguese proceeded with ruthless energy to establish their fortified settlements on the Indian coast, to seize points of vantage in the Indian Ocean, and to beat off all attempts by the Mahomedan sovereigns at Alexandria and Constantinople to resist European predominance in those waters. It may be thought fortunate that even Solyman the magnificent, in the height of his glory, failed in his efforts to expel the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean; for his success might have been disastrous to Eastern Christendom. If the Turkish Sultan, who at the opening of the sixteenth century was supreme in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and whose fleets swept the Mediterranean, could have kept the Indian trade to its ancient and direct course through Egypt and Syria, the wealth that he might thus have secured must have added prodigiously to the force of his arms by sea and land. A colossal military empire upon the Bosphorus, commanding the avenues of Asiatic trade, might even in our own days overawe half Europe, and would have been irresistible three hundred years ago. Yet Venice foresaw so clearly that the diversion of trade to the ocean route would be her death-blow, that she vigorously, though in vain, supported the Turkish Sultan. By the end of the sixteenth century that inestimable privilege, the chief control of Eastern commerce in European waters, had passed for ever out of the hands of the Italian cities, whose gradual commercial decay

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from that epoch showed plainly where lay the main-spring of their prosperity and political expansion. From the shores of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, from Alexandria and Constantinople, from Venice and Genoa, the rich trade of India with Europe was now transferred to the ocean-going peoples of Western Europe. It was cut off in the Indian seas and almost monopolized for a time by Portugal, whose sovereigns improved their opportunity with remarkable activity, sending out fleets to range over the whole coast of South Asia from the Persian Gulf to Ceylon. Nevertheless their period of triumphant prosperity was short, for in 1580 all the strength and soul of Portuguese enterprise were crushed out of her by annexation to Spain. The Spaniards threw away their opportunity; they found it easier to dig up the precious metals in America than to make long voyages to India; and instead of using their treasure they tried to hoard it. From the days of the Romans up to our own time the Indian trade has drained the gold and silver of Europe; but the Spaniards were under the delusion, so long prevalent in Europe, that to export bullion is to exhaust a country's wealth; so that their commerce with Asia was fatally hampered by strict prohibitions against sending the precious metals abroad. This false mercantile theory must have materially retarded the expansion of the foreign trade of Europe; for we find the East India Company in the seventeenth century constantly accused of impoverishing England by their despatches of bullion. It was indeed long before any but the maritime trading classes, to whom the needs and practice of distant commerce brought real experience, understood that the pre-

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cious metals, no less than quicksilver, must find their own natural level, or must fall in value.

By the end of the sixteenth century, therefore, the sea-borne trade of Asia with Europe had passed away from the Mediterranean cities, from Alexandria and Constantinople, from Venice and Genoa, and was being rapidly taken up by the cities of the Atlantic and the North Sea. The direct water-way had been discovered; commercial competition among the Western nations was beginning; and the opening of sea communication established new points of contact between Europe and Asia, slowly but surely growing into a close connexion that has affected the subsequent history of both continents, has largely influenced the politics of the maritime powers, and has determined the whole destiny of India. When Queen Elizabeth recognised the independence of the Dutch republic and thus became committed to war with Spain, the united naval forces of the two nations were directed against the Asiatic settlements of Portugal, which were then, as has been said, under the Spanish crown. The desperate struggle of the United Provinces against Philip II exposed Spanish vessels to the vindictive hostility of the Protestant traders in Eastern waters; and the Charter granted by Elizabeth (1601) to the London East India Company, which was the outcome of this alliance with Holland, indicates the Eastern direction that our commerce then began to take.

At this period, moreover, the common right of all nations to trade freely and peacefully with Asia, though it was asserted by the Dutch as against the Spanish monopoly, was in fact no more recognised than a com-

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mon right to cultivate or colonize. Each country was striving to seize and appropriate the largest possible share of this profitable commerce, to the forcible exclusion of all interlopers; they were all contending for complete and masterful possession; they were conquering by water as they might be conquering by land, and fiercely attacking any intruder upon their trading ground as if he were an invader of their territory. At the end of the sixteenth century the Spaniards claimed the whole right of trade with the East Indies as part of their sovereignty; the Indian seas were their territorial waters; they permitted no European port except their own to exist upon the Indian sea-board. 'The Indies,' they declared, 'East and West, are our house, privately possessed by us for more than 100 years; and no one has a right to enter without our permission;' they claimed over these vast regions the same sovereign jurisdiction that we now affirm over our Indian empire. In 1605 the Spaniards threatened with the severest penalties any Hollander presuming to trade in the East Indies; but the war between Spain and her revolted provinces was carried on in Asia as bitterly as in Europe, and largely accelerated the downfall of the old Portuguese domination on the Indian sea-board. The question of the Eastern trade was the most difficult and obstinately disputed point in the negotiations which ended with the recognition by Spain of Holland's independence. The Spanish king offered in 1607 to renounce his claim of sovereignty over the United Provinces if the Dutch would on their side abandon their navigation to the East Indies. But the Dutch treated this as the most valuable property of their own State; they knew the Indian commerce to

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be the chief stay and subsistence of naval dominion in either country; they saw that while they would be ruined by resigning it, by retaining it they should keep the power of retaliating in Asia upon Spain for oppression or injuries in Europe. They insisted so firmly on their right to trade freely in the East Indies that the Spaniards at last gave way upon the point, though it was never openly conceded.

Section II. *Holland, England, and France.*

But although the Dutch asserted trade liberties against Spain, their own policy was to establish the strictest monopoly. Between 1597 and 1600 the Dutch ships had first rounded the Cape of Good Hope into Asiatic waters, where they were very fiercely handled by the Spanish forces in that quarter. In 1603 the Universal East India Company had been founded in Holland, with exclusive privilege of trading east of the Cape, with a great capital subscribed by all the provinces, with full power to make peace and war in the name of the United Provinces, to levy troops, and to appoint generals. Strong fleets were sent out with orders to expel the Spanish-Portuguese from the Spice Islands and the Indian coasts, to found settlements, and in fact to annex the trade to Holland precisely as they might annex an enemy's province. These proceedings were first taken in co-operation with the English, who now make their first appearance, as represented by a Company, in the field of Asiatic commerce. But James I on his accession preferred the Spanish alliance; and all attempts to arrest or adjust the earliest disputes of England and

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Holland over their respective trade limits in the East Indies served only to complicate the impending quarrel. The estrangement between these two States, caused by the wavering policy of the first two Stuarts, who leaned towards Spain and France, was undoubtedly fostered by growing commercial jealousies. Thenceforward, throughout the seventeenth century, the annals of our East Indian affairs record a continuous persevering contest between the English and Dutch for advantage in the Indian trade, and for possession of the settlements that were necessary to its existence. It is true that Portugal, on recovering her independence in 1640, made some feeble attempts to restore her former position in the East; but she was obliged to sign a treaty which confined her to Goa and some minor ports on the west coast of India; while on the other hand all conquests made by Holland in Asia were recognised by the Peace of Munster. The Dutch had gradually annexed most of the principal Portuguese settlements; they asserted paramount European power in all those seas and islands; so that they constantly came into sharp collision with the English, who were still weak in those regions, and whose merchant adventurers were ill supported by the vacillating and unpopular government of the Stuarts.

It should be understood that the term 'East Indies,' according to the nomenclature of those days, comprised not only India proper, but also the countries on the east side of the Bay of Bengal, with the straits of Malacca, Java, and all the Spice Islands further eastward in the Java and Chinese seas, such as the Celebes and the Moluccas. In the first half of the seventeenth century

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the traffic with the Spice Islands was by far the most important and profitable[1]; and from this branch of the general East India trade the Dutch were determined to exclude us; for indeed upon this commerce the prosperity of their State and people largely depended. In this manner began the contest for valuable markets that gave so strong an impulse, at this period, to the system of chartered companies; for the early traders in Asiatic waters had to fight their own way and hold their own ground; they could expect little or no help in Asia from their own governments, and nothing but merciless hostility from their European rivals. Trade was more valuable, to the maritime folk, than territory, and commerce than conquest. But traffic with distant lands could not be carried on without taking up stations and arming ships; since the understanding among European nations was that regular diplomatic relations did not practically extend beyond certain well-known lines of longitude. According to a treaty made between France and Spain in 1598, in the regions westward of the Canary Islands 'tout serait à la force;' and although Spain and Portugal claimed immense jurisdictions, political and ecclesiastic, in the East, yet these were of a nature too impalpable and fluctuating to be distinctly acknowledged by international law. The Chartered Companies therefore represented a device, invented to suit these conditions of existence, for extending commerce and for securing it by territorial appropriations, without directly pledging a

[1] Profits of an English ship's voyage to the Clove islands in 1606 —234 per cent. on the original sum subscribed. Bruce's *Annals of the East India Company*.

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government to answer for the acts of its subjects. The Charter expressed the delegation of certain sovereign powers for distinct purposes; it amounted from one point of view to a licence for private war; and the system has since had a long, eventful, and curious history, which has as yet by no means ended.

The point to be observed is that this system, under which the foundations of our Indian empire were laid, was something very different from the kind of scrambling haphazard adventure to which the establishment of that empire is by common imagination so often ascribed. On the contrary, it provided, in the hands of a free and wealthy people, a very powerful instrument of colonial and commercial expansion. The first maritime explorers from the despotically-governed States of Spain and Portugal seized lands and claimed navigation rights in the name of their crown, which at once treated all these captures as increments to its complete sovereignty. Between the Dutch Republic and its East India Company the connexion was exceedingly close; although a formal distinction was always maintained. The English, on the other hand, adopted from the beginning, and preserved up to the end of the eighteenth century, a system under which the State held a position not unlike that of partner *en commandite*, taking no risks, acknowledging very slight responsibility, interfering occasionally to demand a share of profits or to lay a heavy fine upon Charter renewals, and assisting the Company only when to do so accorded with the general commercial or political interests of the nation. Armed with a valuable monopoly, and left to their own resources, the English Company relied not so much upon State aid

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as upon their own wealth and energy; they underwent some perilous vicissitudes and performed some remarkable exploits. The extent to which unofficial war was practised, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, by the roving nations of Europe, is perhaps hardly appreciated in this law-abiding age. If our merchants in India or the Persian Gulf had been obliged to refer home for remedy of grievances or settlement of disputes with Dutch, French, or Portuguese, they would have been very soon exterminated. They did no such thing; they took to their own weapons, and their military operations were often upon a considerable scale. In 1622 there was profound peace between Portugal (which then belonged to Spain) and England; but the English East India Company were at bitter war in the Indian Ocean with the Portuguese, who had disturbed their trade and molested the Honourable Company's ships. So the English Company fitted out at Surat a small fleet, and sent it up the Persian Gulf with orders to assist Shah Abbas, the Persian king, in turning the Portuguese out of the island of Hormuz, which they had held for a century, and which gave them exclusive command of the Gulf. The business was done, with the aid of the Persians, very thoroughly; there was a regular bombardment of the fortress, and a naval action with the Portuguese royal fleet, until the island was surrendered, the fortifications razed, and the Portuguese garrison transported to Goa.

We do not hear that Portugal made any serious remonstrance against these proceedings, which would certainly startle modern diplomacy; but it stands on

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record that James I and the Lord High Admiral (the Duke of Buckingham) exacted large sums of money from the Company as the royal share of the profits. Another heavy fine was again demanded by Buckingham from the Company before he would permit them to despatch a fleet for the protection of their commerce against Portuguese reprisals. Probably the English might have claimed to set off against the affair at Hormuz other similar irregularities on the part of the Portuguese; for among the nations then engaged on the East India trade there was little scruple about ways and means of dealing with rivals. The massacre by the Dutch of almost all the English at Amboyna (in the Moluccas) in 1622, was a piece of cruel iniquity that bred long and fierce resentment against Holland among the English merchants and mariners of that generation, and heated the animosities that broke out later between the two nations in Europe. On the other hand, the preponderance of the Dutch in the Spice Islands, and their dangerous enmity, had undoubtedly much weight in diverting English trade toward the Asiatic continent, and thus in making the factories on the Indian sea-coast the principal object of our attention.

On the western side of India the English had settled first at Surat, in 1612, under a *firmán* of the Moghul government, with special privileges procured by Sir Thomas Roe's embassy[1] from James I to the Emperor Jehángir. In 1630 the English and Portuguese fleets fought a respectable battle in that roadstead, without prejudice to international relations at home. In 1638 Surat

[1] 1615–18.

became the Company's chief establishment; and by 1643 they were established on the east coast at Masulipatam and Madras, with a factory up the Hooghly river for the Bengal traffic. Their influence at the Moghul's court was substantially promoted by the deputation of Mr. Boughton, a surgeon in the East India Company's service, to Agra, for the purpose of professionally treating the emperor, who afterwards appointed him physician to the household. By the middle of the seventeenth century the Company were trading all along the southern sea-board of Asia from the Persian Gulf eastward to the borders of China; and as the commercial operations of the Dutch took the same geographical range, the two nations were in close competition and incessant collision throughout this extensive line. But the quarrel at home between King and Parliament checked English enterprize at the fountain-head. For our government could only lend a weak and fluctuating support in disputes with foreign rivals; while Holland and Portugal were actively backed by their respective governments, who gave the direct weight of national authority to all expeditions and annexations in the East. As the English Company were thus virtually in the position of a private association contending against two sovereign powers, it is not surprising that toward the end of the civil war they were in very low water, while the Dutch had gained superiority over the English on the Indian coasts, were cutting off their trade with the Spice Islands, and treating them with the greatest arrogance everywhere. The State papers of this time record incessant complaints of the 'intolerable injuries, cruelty, insolency, and cunning circumventing

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projects' of the Dutch in the East Indies; who made no scruple about sending fleets with large bodies of soldiers to seize or expel foreign merchants, and to occupy stations, whenever it was their interest to do so.

The English Company were also much troubled by the encroachments of interlopers, or private independent traders, some of whom were little better than pirates, for whose misconduct in Asiatic waters the Company were nevertheless often called to account by the local authorities. In default of any diplomatic or consular relations between Europe and Asia, a responsible trading association, holding regular grants and licences from the Moghul or his governors, was naturally regarded as representing the nationality to which it belonged, and had to suffer reprisals or pay indemnities for the misdeeds of its compatriots. Still graver consequences might follow offence given by the independent English merchantman to the Portuguese or the Dutch, who thought little of sinking an intruding vessel, drowning the whole crew deliberately, or levelling an obnoxious factory. Only a company supported by the State, with an exclusive trading Charter, could command the capital, exert the strength, and maintain the consistent organization that was indispensable in those days, when English commerce had to fight its own battle against enemies who would have entirely expelled it from the great markets of the East. In these essential qualifications for success the Dutch excelled all other nations during the greater part of the seventeenth century. The whole Republic, as is observed by an English writer of the time, was virtually an association for the purposes of navigation and trade; the Dutch companies

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were connected organically with the constitution of the States General. And since in Holland the people at large were merchants and mariners, their commercial policy was stronger, more stiffly resolute, and better supported than that of States ruled by a Court and a landed aristocracy, whose aims and interests were diverse and conflicting.

These were the advantages that gave Holland pre-eminence in Asiatic commerce during the greater part of the seventeenth century. She had stripped Portugal of some of her most important possessions in the East, and had fixed her trading posts firmly in well-chosen places. Under Cromwell's vigorous rule, however, the English began to recover their position in the East Indies. The jealousies, political and commercial, between the two Republics culminated in the war of 1651–4; when East India merchants, whose grievances had formed one of the chief grounds of hostility, prayed for permission to fit out an armed fleet against the Dutch in Asia, who had been making depredations on our shipping in Indian waters. In 1654 a peace was patched up upon payment of compensation for injuries, especially for the 'bloodie business of Amboyna,' and with the effect of defining the situation of the English on the Indian littoral. Nevertheless, although the enmity and the encroachments of the Dutch in Asia by no means ceased, the proposals made to Cromwell for dissolving the Company's monopoly and throwing open the whole Asiatic trade were so tempting to a ruler who was in sore need of ready-money, that he was hardly dissuaded from it by the combined weight of the arguments and liberal subsidies of the London Company.

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Yet it was absolutely clear that the free-traders would have fallen an easy prey to the common enemy, for the power of the Dutch was again on the increase. They now maintained large military and naval forces in the East Indies, obstructed our trade, harassed our agencies, and disregarded all treaties. They drove the English off the coast of Eastern Asia, seized Ceylon, blockaded Bantam—the Company's headquarters in Java—and once more tried to exterminate the English factories in the Spice Islands.

Meanwhile the trade was much disturbed, and the Company's settlements were put in jeopardy, by the civil war that broke out in India among the sons of Shah Jehán after that emperor's death, in 1658. By 1660, however, Aurangzeb's triumph over his brothers had restored tranquillity. The beginning of his long reign, full of importance to Anglo-Indian history, synchronizes with the Restoration of Charles II, an event which changed the political connexions of England and materially affected our commercial system. The Company wanted more extensive powers; and Charles II wanted to obliterate from their existing Charter the name of Cromwell; so he gave them a new Charter, authorizing them to make peace and war with any people not being Christian, although in fact their only troublesome enemies belonged to Christendom. Portugal now sought the English alliance in the hope of recovering some of her Eastern possessions that she had lost while under the Spanish yoke, or at least of defending against the Dutch what she had been able to retain. These negotiations brought us the valuable acquisition of the island of Bombay, which was ceded to England in 1661, as the pledge of an arrange-

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ment for a kind of defensive war against the Dutch in Asia. But since the Portuguese were as jealous of the English as they were afraid of the Dutch, some years passed before the English found themselves in quiet possession of the island; nor was it until 1669 that Bombay and St. Helena were granted in full property to the London Company.

In 1661 Charles II had granted to this Company by Charter the entire English traffic in the East Indies, with licence to coin money, administer justice, and punish interlopers; and he confirmed their authority to make war and peace with non-Christian States in those parts. He had also adopted Cromwell's famous Navigation Law, which was devised to give our sailors and shipping a monopoly of the transport of goods interchanged with England, and was chiefly aimed at the Dutch, who were then the principal carriers of the sea-borne trade of Europe.

In this manner the commercial resources of England were formed, organized, and directed towards maintaining an equal contest against inveterate foes; nor can there be any doubt that trade monopolies were in those days essential to the existence of our commercial settlements in Asia. We had then no diplomatic representatives in non-Christian countries; the home governments paid no attention to the grievances of any single merchant or ship-master; and the Amboyna massacre is only one example of the reckless methods in use among commercial rivals in distant countries. Without large capital, an armament, and authority to use it, without

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some kind of rough jurisdiction over their countrymen in distant settlements, even a company of merchants could have had little influence at home or security abroad.

All these measures for strengthening the East India trade angered the Dutch, who were also alarmed by the sale of Dunkirk to France, which let the French into the narrow seas, and by the weakening of the Spanish barrier of the Netherlands between France and Holland. The quarrel between the two nations over Eastern affairs became sharper and more violent; for the Dutch were resolved to check and beat back the encroachment of the English on their Asiatic trade. Louis XIV, who had just been induced by Colbert to launch the French East India Company, and who desired to draw off the attention of England from his continental projects, joined Holland next year against us. But the fierce naval fighting that ensued between the Dutch and English enfeebled both nations; and as they were both equally distrustful of the designs of the French in Europe and Asia, a general peace, upon the basis of *Uti possidetis* as to territory, and of the amicable adjustment of all disputes as to commerce, was ratified by the Treaty of Breda[1].

[1] 1667.

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CHAPTER II.

INFLUENCE AND CONNEXION OF POLITICS IN EUROPE AND ASIA (1660–1700).

SECTION I. *State of Affairs in Europe.*

THE three maritime peoples of the West—the English, Dutch, and French—had now manifestly entered the lists of competition for commercial ascendancy in Asiatic waters, Spain and Portugal having already fallen far into the rear. The English Company's establishments in the East Indies consisted at this time of the Presidency of Bantam, with Macassar and other places in the Indian Archipelago; Fort St. George and its dependent factories on the Coromandel Coast and in the Bay of Bengal; and on the West Coast of Bombay, Surat, with other subordinate posts on that side of India[1].

It is of primary importance, in order to set in clear light the earlier subsequent stages of the rise of British dominion, and to explain why England finally distanced other competitors in this long and eventful race, that the vicissitudes of European politics toward the end of the seventeenth century should be briefly touched upon; because the success of England in the East is

[1] Birdwood, *Report on Old Records*. There were also some places in the Persian Gulf.

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largely due to the mistakes of France and the misfortunes of Holland in the West. The foreign relations of England at this period were unsettled and curiously complicated. In 1665 Holland and England were at war; in 1666 France joined Holland; but in 1668 England, Holland, and Sweden had formed the Triple Alliance against France; while in 1672 France and England combined to attack Holland[1]. The motives for these rapid changes of attitude were to some degree connected with Asiatic commerce. From the beginning of the century the Eastern trade had been a make-weight and a perceptible element in the regulation of our policy abroad, for the London merchants had never been without means of influencing the Court or the Parliament; but the adjustment of this important national interest to the varying exigencies of the general situation in Europe had about this time become peculiarly difficult. During the interval between the Restoration (1661) and the Revolution (1688), when our commerce increased and throve mightily, we had to make head in Asia against the jealous antagonism of the Dutch; while in Europe the Dutch were our natural allies against the growth of the arbitrary aggressiveness of France. In the East it was of vital importance to our commerce that the power of Holland should be repressed, in the West we were vitally interested in upholding it; the balance of trade in Asia was inconsistent with the balance of politics in

[1] It may be noticed, as showing the strength, even at this early time, of the English Company, that they were required by the Government to send out a large body of men to defend Bombay; they also employed an armed fleet of some thirty-five vessels.

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Europe. It was remarked by a contemporary diplomatist that England's problem was to keep the peace with Holland without losing our East India trade; for if we supported the Dutch against France they went on elbowing us out of Asia; while in joining France against Holland we were breaking down one maritime power only to make room for another that might become much more formidable. The French navy, indeed, had already been augmented upon an imposing scale; and by 1665 the French Company had fitted out a squadron for the East Indies. In 1672, when England and France were allied against Holland, a French armament under De la Haye sailed for India, occupied the excellent harbour of Trincomalee in Ceylon, and took possession of St. Thomé, close to Madras. The English could not decently oppose the emissaries of a friendly nation, although this first appearance of the French on the Coromandel coast—where in the next century our contest with them was fought out—could not but excite considerable uneasiness. Nor was the situation much improved when both places were subsequently captured from the French by the Dutch.

The three wars against Holland into which England drifted during the seventeenth century (between 1652 and 1672) were all prompted, more or less, by commercial and colonial animosities. For the quarrel in Cromwell's time arose directly out of grievances against the Dutch in Asia; and it is a mistake to suppose, as is commonly thought, that Charles II was induced to attack the Dutch in 1672 merely by French bribes and his sympathy with Roman Catholicism. His alliance with France was undoubtedly aimed against civil and religious

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liberty at home; but abroad one of its objects was to cut down the naval and commercial growth of Holland, with whom we had many unsettled quarrels both in America and in Asia. There were strong and recurrent motives for hostility between the two nations, closely connected with Asiatic affairs[1]. Even Sir William Temple, the negotiator of the Triple Alliance, discusses in one of his essays the question whether we should derive greater advantage than France from the ruin of Holland. Whether in that case we could manage to bring over to England the Dutch trade and shipping, seems to him doubtful; yet he fears that, unless England joins France against Holland, the two continental States might combine against England. All the commercial treaties and stipulations for neutrality in the East during hostilities in Europe had proved in practice nugatory. Nor did the wavering policy of England settle down finally into steady alliance with Holland until it was determined by the urgent necessity of saving the Republic, at all costs, from being completely overwhelmed by the armies of Louis XIV.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, however, the French king had become entirely engrossed in his ambitious and extravagant wars; and the Dutch were fighting desperately for their existence; so that the only two maritime powers from which England had anything to fear in the East were entangled in a great struggle on the European Continent. From these contests Holland emerged, at the Peace of Ryswick (1697), with enfeebled strength, and with her resources for distant expeditions

[1] 'Us they distrust, Spain they despise, Holland they hate.' Letter of Marquis de Ruvigny, French Ambassador in England, 1672.

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materially reduced. But the Dutch had done much damage to the earliest French settlements planted under Colbert's auspices in the East Indies; and France had been so much occupied on the land, particularly when the fortune of war began to turn against her, that she became incapable of pursuing Colbert's wise and far-reaching schemes of commercial and colonial expansion. Her naval development was checked; her maritime enterprise took no fresh flight until after the Peace of Utrecht. In short the French and Dutch had mutually disabled each other, to the great advantage, for operations beyond sea, of the English; who thenceforward begin to draw slowly but continuously to the foremost place in Asiatic conquest and commerce.

From this period of great continental wars in Europe we may date the beginning of substantial prosperity for our East Indian trade; for it was then that the English made good their footing on the Indian coasts. In 1685 the headquarters of their business on the Western side was transferred from Surat to Bombay; in 1686 the chief Bengal agency was removed from Hooghly to Calcutta; and Madras had become their central post on the eastern shores of the Indian peninsula. The Company were liberally encouraged by the government of the two last Stuarts, who granted ample charters, and even despatched armed reinforcements to their settlements. After the establishment of these three principal stations—which became afterwards, as Presidency towns, the cardinal points where the British dominion was first fixed and whence it issued out into spacious radiation—the East India Company resolved, in 1687, to assume indepen-

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dent jurisdiction within their own settlements, to fortify them, to coin money, to collect customs, to act, in short, as a self-governing body within their own limits. They now began to enlist a native militia for the purpose of using their chartered right of protecting themselves by reprisals against oppression or direct attack, and of fighting for their own hand in quarrels with the local governors or petty chiefs. In the new system thus introduced was contained the germ out of which these scattered trading settlements eventually expanded into wide territorial dominion; and the incipient weakness of the Moghul empire furnished both the motives and the opportunity for the change.

Section II. *State of Affairs in India.*

So long as the imperial administration prevailed up to the limits of its furthest provinces, and was effectively felt on either sea-board, the English merchants were quite satisfied with licences allowing them to compound for the export duties, with grants of land for building their factories, and with other privileges for which they paid readily while they got their money's worth. But the outlying possessions of the empire were now no longer peacefully subordinate. The Maratha chief Sivaji was ranging about the Dekhan[1], invading the Carnatic, and dominating the whole upper line of the west coast, not excluding the seaports and settlements held by Europeans. In 1671 he had levied heavy contributions from Surat and the Portuguese colony; nor could the Moghul

[1] The Dekhan is the great central region of the Indian peninsula. The Vindya range of hills and the Nerbudda river may be taken as marking roughly its northern limit.

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governors give any trustworthy protection, for Aurangzeb's attention was distracted by a revolt in Afghanistan, which after a long and arduous campaign he was totally unable to put down. When he returned to the Dekhan, he found his enemies stronger than before in the field. After Sivaji's death in 1680 his son Sambaji continued the revolt; the imperial armies were gradually worn out by incessant warfare, by futile pursuits of an enemy that always avoided a decisive blow, and by the disorganization of the central government caused by the emperor's long absence from his capital upon distant campaigns. Aurangzeb had destroyed the Mahomedan kingdoms of Golkhonda and Bijapur in south-western India, which might at any rate have served as breakwaters against the spread of the Maratha insurrection; and the war was now becoming epidemic. The dislocation of the native administration led to the consolidation of the foreign settlements; since the Companies were compelled for their self-preservation to act upon this opportunity of taking up a more independent position in the country. The relaxation of the supreme legitimate authority loosened its hold of the more distant governorships, and with local irresponsibility came local oppression. The merchants became exposed to irregular extortion and capricious ransoming by subordinate officials who could give them no valid guarantees or regular safeguard; while their immunities and privileges, even when obtained at the capital from the emperor's ministers, were often disregarded with impunity at the seaports.

In these circumstances the English Company convinced themselves, after much anxious discussion, that

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the success and comparative security of the Dutch, as formerly of the Portuguese, had been founded on their practice of seizing and openly fortifying posts strong enough to render the holders independent of the imperial pleasure, and to resist the arbitrary exactions of neighbouring officials or potentates. Their assumed jurisdiction was still to be entirely confined to the sea coast, and its object went no further than the security of their trade. But the English soon discovered that the time had not yet come when a foreign flag could be safely set up on the Indian mainland. The Portuguese had established themselves before the empire had extended to the west coast; the Dutch had fixed their independent settlements for the most part upon islands. In the seventeenth century the power of the Moghul emperor, although undermined, was not yet so far reduced that he could be defied with impunity on his own sea-board. When, in 1687, the East India Company ventured to declare war against the emperor Aurangzeb, all the English settlements soon found themselves placed in great jeopardy by this rashness. It was lucky for the foreigners that the capture and execution of Sambaji, the Maratha leader, roused the Hindus of the south-west country to unite in strenuous revolt against the fanatic Mahomedan sovereign, who thereafter became too deeply entangled in the meshes of guerilla warfare and sporadic insurrections to find leisure for dealing thoroughly with comparatively insignificant mercantile intruders. Moreover, since the Moghul government maintained no regular navy, it could not keep up a blockade of the harbours and river estuaries or bar the

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entry of foreign ships; while on the other hand the imperial customs revenue suffered heavily from their hostility.

The emperor Aurangzeb better known in India by his title of Álamgír) was the last able representative of a dynasty that had conquered and ruled in India from the middle of the sixteenth century. The Moghul empire was founded by the brilliant audacity and warlike skill of Báber, a Chagatai Tartar who with an army of 12,000 men overthrew the dominion of the Pathán kings at Delhi, and subdued all the northern provinces of India. It had been consolidated and raised to its full height of splendour and power by Akbar, a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth. Four successive emperors reigned 151 years, from Akbar's accession in 1556 to Aurangzeb's death in 1707; and as in Asia a long reign is always a strong reign, for a century and a half the Moghul was fairly India's master. The dynasty was foreign by descent and habits; the strength of the government was sustained by constant importation of fresh blood from abroad; the military and civil chiefs were mainly vigorous recruits from Central Asia who took service under the Indian sovereigns of their own race and religion. Akbar and his two successors were politic rulers who allied themselves with the princely families of the Hindus, respected up to a certain point the prejudices of the population, and kept both civil and religious despotism within reasonable bounds. The Emperors Jehángir and Shah Jehán were both sons of Hindu mothers; but Aurangzeb, the son of Shah Jehán, and the fourth in descent from Akbar, was a Mahomedan by full parentage, and a bigoted

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Islamite by temperament; and after his triumph in the great civil war that broke out among the sons of Shah Jehán, he launched out into a career of fanatic persecution and ambitious territorial aggrandisement. In the writings of Francois Bernier, who was Court Physician to the Moghul emperor toward the beginning of Aurangzeb's long reign, may be found an excellent picture of the condition of the empire at that period. His book contains a lively sketch of contemporary history, and is full of striking observations upon the system of government, the composition of the army, and the more prominent features of Indian society and administration. Perhaps the most valuable part of it is the letter 'Concerning Hindusthan,' which Bernier wrote, after his return to France, to Colbert, the celebrated minister of Louis XIV, who had just set on foot the French East India Company, our formidable rival in the eighteenth century. His description of the military and official classes is instructive—

'The great Moghul,' he says, 'is a foreigner in Hindusthan; consequently he finds himself in a hostile country, or nearly so, containing hundreds of Gentiles (Hindus) to one Moghul, or even to one Mahomedan . . . The court itself does not now consist, as originally, of real Moghuls, but is a medley of Usbegs, Persians, Arabs, and Turks, or descendants from all these people.'

'It must not be imagined,' he elsewhere observes, 'that the Omrah or Lords of the Moghul's court are members of ancient families, as our nobility in France . . . they mostly consist of adventurers from different nations, who entice one another to the court, and are generally persons

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of low descent, some having been originally slaves. The Moghul raises them to dignity or degrades them to obscurity according to his own pleasure and caprice.'

Bernier goes on to show that the total insecurity of all private property, land revenue exactions, instability of government, the denial of justice, the tyranny and cupidity of the sovereign and his subordinates, account abundantly for the rapid decline of Asiatic States[1]. He touches, in this manner, upon the symptoms, already perceptible to a close observer, of the empire's political and economical decline.

Soon after the date at which Bernier wrote, Aurangzeb entered upon the interminable wars in South India which gradually involved him in the misfortunes and difficulties that darkened the last years of his reign. He succeeded in upsetting the minor Mahomedan kingdoms which had been strong enough to hold down the Hindu population; but he had in fact weakened his empire by extending it; for the new southern provinces could not be effectively managed at a distance from the central authority, and the Hindus were not only provoked by his fanaticism, but encouraged by his inability to control them. The Moghul government, moreover, had never paid much attention to its sea frontier, being quite unaccustomed to expect foreign enemies or intruders from any other quarter than the north-west, through the

[1] 'The country is ruined by the necessity of defraying the enormous charges required to maintain the splendour of a numerous court, and to pay a large army maintained for the purpose of keeping the people in subjection. *No adequate idea can be conveyed of the sufferings of that people.*'—Bernier.

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Afghan passes. The only naval force on the Indian coast belonged to the Síddhis, an independent Abyssinian colony, whose chiefs occasionally placed their fleet at the disposal of Aurangzeb for employment on the west side of the Indian peninsula.

To these causes and favouring circumstances, therefore, to the incipient decline of the central sovereignty, to the relaxation of imperial authority on the outskirts of the dominion, and especially to the commotion caused by the spread of the Hindu rebellion under energetic Maratha leaders, we may attribute the facility with which the English made good their foothold on the shores of India toward the close of the seventeenth century.

It is important, moreover, to remember that at the time when the mistakes and troubles of the Moghul empire were opening the gates of India to access from the sea, there set in an era of war in Europe which for many years disabled or diverted the resources of England's two maritime rivals, France and Holland. The reigns of the two autocratic monarchs who ruled France and India throughout the second half of the seventeenth century tally very nearly in point of time, for the dates of their respective accessions very nearly coincide; and they died early in the eighteenth century within a few years of each other. In the policy to which each of these celebrated rulers personally attached himself, and in its unfortunate consequences, there is also much more than a fanciful resemblance. The accession of both Aurangzeb and Louis XIV took place at a moment when the splendour and fame of their dynasties were in full lustre;

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they both inaugurated a career of conquest and unscrupulous attacks upon weaker neighbours that was at first triumphant; they both gradually undermined the prosperity of their kingdoms and the stability of their houses by wasteful and impolitic wars. Fanatic religious persecution of their own subjects, unwieldy centralization of all governmental authority by the levelling of local institutions, widespread corruption and a magnificent court under the influence of bigots, lackies, and panders, were characteristics of the reign of the Bourbon as well as of the Moghul. And in each instance half a century's autocratic misrule, complicated by unfortunate foreign wars, sectarian revolts, and great fiscal oppression, brought great misery on the people, and fatally enervated the monarchy. Toward the end of the seventeenth century the clouds began to gather, and from the beginning of the eighteenth century the fortunes of both sovereigns were perceptibly on the wane. It so happened that the decline, or eclipse, of each power was eminently favourable to the rising commercial ascendancy of the English nation. In 1691 King William formed the grand alliance of the Germanic States and of the maritime powers, England, Holland, and Spain, against France; whereby the preponderance of the French was checked, and their schemes of colonial and commercial expansion thrown aside or absorbed in a great European war. The Peace of Ryswick suspended hostilities for a few years, but it may be said that during the whole period from 1690 to 1713, the French monarchy was engaged in conflicts with all its European neighbours on a vast scale of ruinous expenditure.

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The condition of the Moghul empire was even worse. We have seen that during the seventeenth century, so long as the Moghul empire retained its vigour, it was found impossible for any foreign adventurers to obtain more than a precarious footing, by sufferance, on the mainland of India. But when the eighteenth century opened, the disorder of the imperial government was manifestly culminating to a climax. The great age of Aurangzeb, the persistence and contagious spread of the Hindu revolt against his oppression; the certainty that his death would be the signal for civil war among his sons, and that the succession must abide the chance of battle; financial distress and the visible loosening of his administration everywhere—these were the ordinary symptoms of debility, decay, and approximate dissolution in an Oriental dynasty. In the north-west the Persians and the rebellious Afghan tribes had now wrested from Aurangzeb his border strongholds; his grasp on that all-important frontier had become insecure, and the high roads from Central Asia were again open to invaders. In the south-west the Moghul, after putting down the kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkhonda, had been unable to reconstruct an administration strong enough to repress the turbulent elements that his impolitic demolitions had set free. The disbanded soldiery, the plundered peasants, the disaffected Hindu landholders, all rallied round the standard of the Maratha captains, who bribed or daunted the imperial officials, harried the districts, cut off the revenue, and defeated the Moghul forces in detail.

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CHAPTER III.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY (1690–1702).

SECTION I. *Condition and importance of the East Indian trade.*

FOR the English East India Company the last years of the seventeenth century had been a period of not untroubled transition from a purely commercial system toward a kind of elementary local self-government. The increasing weakness of the Moghul empire doubled the risks and uncertainty of their trade; producing constant alarms from the fighting that went on near their settlements, liability to plunder and incessant exactions, exposure to interference from interlopers, and danger of encroachment or attack from European rivals. They had now deliberately adopted the plan of endeavouring to rid themselves of dependence on the native authorities; and their agents were enjoined to spare no pains for improving their revenue. 'The increase of our revenue,' they wrote in 1690, 'is the subject of our care as much as our trade; t'is that must maintain our force when twenty accidents may interrupt our trade; t'is that must make us a nation in India . . . and upon this account it is that the wise Dutch, in all their general advices that we have seen, write ten paragraphs con-

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cerning their government, their civil and military policy, warfare, and the increase of their revenue, for one paragraph they write concerning trade.' These instructions show that, to use an Oriental metaphor, the scent of dominion was already in the nostrils of the English Company, that they were by this time on the track of higher game than the profits of trade. At Madras and Bombay their fortifications were in fair condition, although their troops, beside a few Europeans, were chiefly a rabble of Armenians, Arabs, negroes, and half-bred Portuguese. In Bengal the imperial viceroy, being himself hard pressed, had permitted their agent to fortify Calcutta, where Fort William was named after the reigning King of England. In 1687, having resolved to bring all their settlements under a regulated administration, they had fitted out a large armament at home, had obtained King James' authority for their governor to make peace and war in India, and had sent out Sir John Child with orders to levy against the Moghul government a war of reprisals for damages and insults suffered from the native officials. That government, however, though it was in a bad plight, had still power and pride sufficient for turning fiercely upon such assailants. In western India the Company's attempt to defy the imperial authority brought them to considerable discomfiture, for Aurangzeb himself was encamped at no great distance with his main army. At Bombay, where the force is reported to have consisted of fifteen European soldiers in addition to a raw native militia, the governor was actually besieged in his own town and castle, and the place was reduced to awkward straits by the fleet of the

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Abyssinian Síddhi. The expedition against Bengal and the north-eastern coast totally failed; the factories were attacked and had to be temporarily abandoned. Orders were issued by the emperor to expel the English from Madras, where the President, having only fifteen English soldiers in garrison with some half-caste Portuguese, lost heart on hearing that a Moghul force was moving southward. Sir John Child, who impersonated the war policy of the Company, died in 1689; and the business ended rather ignominiously with the issue by Aurangzeb of a lofty Order reciting that on receipt of an humble submissive petition by the English His Majesty had mercifully pardoned their transgressions. At this message the Company's directors at home professed great indignation, for no petition of that kind had been sent; but the moment was not opportune for prosecuting the quarrel.

During the next ten years, however, the difficulties and decadence of the Moghul empire were manifestly on the increase. One of Aurangzeb's sons invaded India from Persia with a foreign army; the great provinces or kingdoms of South India—the Dekhan, Mysore, the Carnatic—were barely kept in obedience by large forces; for the great age of Aurangzeb held all India in fear and expectation of imminent change. All this instability of affairs compelled the foreign settlements to rely more and more upon their own resources for self-defence against arbitrary officials, rebel leaders, marauding banditti, and, finally, against each other. For war had been raging in Europe from 1690 to 1697; the French had been doing enormous damage to our homeward bound ships, having on one occasion captured a whole fleet of

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merchantmen; nor did the Dutch, though our faithful allies in Europe, relax their inveterate jealousy of our progress in Asia.

Then the appearance in India, in 1698, of a rival English East India Company created great internal complications; each association tried to ruin the other; each hoisted the English flag and sent embassies to contend for the emperor's patronage at his court; while the local governors played off one against the other, favouring each Company alternately, and taking bribes impartially from both. The fact that the new English Company had offered their government a loan of two millions sterling for an exclusive trade charter, shows the immense profits that were now expected from commerce with the East Indies, and attests the confidence with which the London capitalists were embarking upon the enterprise.

That the vast importance of our Eastern trade was already realized to its full extent at the end of the seventeenth century, is abundantly shown by the writings of Sir William Davenant, the chief commercial authority of his day. He observes that under the Tudor dynasty England had enjoyed great internal prosperity for a hundred years, and that the Dutch had soon found themselves too many for the narrow territory of their republic; whereby both nations were driven into foreign trade by an increasing population. On the other hand, he says, the French people had diminished during the long religious wars of the sixteenth century; so that the two Protestant nations could push on vigorously to their

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forward place in the commerce beyond seas. In his essay on the East Indian Trade, Davenant enlarges further upon the great profits and political advantages that accrued to England from her position in the East Indies, upon the strength of Holland in that quarter, and upon the extreme impolicy of allowing the Dutch to acquire such predominance as would enable them to put down all rivalry. Of the East India trade he says —*Whatever country can be in the full possession of it will give law to all the commercial world.* He declares that if we should lose our hold in India, we should let go half our foreign business; and he insists on the point that by losing the trade we should be entirely deprived of the dominion of the sea, 'for only foreign trade can maintain a great fleet.' He describes the 'formidable power' of Holland in the East Indies, the immense capital that they had spent in raising and consolidating it; the forts and castles well provided and garrisoned; their large fleet; their good harbours; the energy, wealth, and unity of the Dutch Company, which was an incorporation of the seven chambers of the seven Provinces, almost coeval in origin with the State itself, counting among its numbers all the ablest and best hands in the country. He shows that if we should abandon the traffic, the Dutch would undoubtedly enjoy the whole, when England must be content thereafter to trade under their protection and flag. In such an event he calculates that an entire monopoly of East Indian goods would bring Holland yearly more treasure than could be got from Peru and Mexico, that they might earn a revenue of six million sterling; that this great in-

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crease of wealth would entirely turn against us the balance of naval preponderance, which would certainly prove our ruin if (as was at the time not impossible) the Dutch provinces should fall under the ascendancy of France. If, on the other hand, the English bestir themselves and prevail over Holland, 'if our foreign business were enlarged to the utmost extent of which it is capable, *we should thereby acquire such wealth and power as that England with its proper forces might be able to deal with any nation whatsoever*;' we might even become, like Rome, the head of a vast dominion, the fountain of law, the spring of power, honours, and offices throughout an immense territory.

The whole essay of Davenant may be read as a useful corrective of the inveterate habit, from which even writers on English history are not always free, of regarding the development of our Indian empire out of a few scattered trading ports as a marvellous phenomenon, quite unforeseen and almost inexplicable. It is worth while to point out the superficiality of this commonplace view, and to lay stress on the evidence available to prove that our success can be naturally explained, could indeed have been to a large degree predicted. Our dominion grew out of much stronger and deeper roots than is usually supposed. To understand its true origin we must remember that our settlements on the Indian mainland were valuable not only as emporia for the very profitable trade in the exchange of goods between India and Europe, but also because they were the fixed points upon which the whole commerce of England with South Asia, from the Persian Gulf eastward to

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Sumatra, Java, and Spice Islands as far as the China seas, may be said to have pivoted; they kept open and were indeed indispensable for the communications along the line of what was then the richest sea-borne traffic in the world. For the nation that could engross that traffic held the whole carrying trade between Asia and Western Europe, and supplied all the adjacent European countries. Upon the wealth and multiplied force acquired in extending, step by step, their influence over this wide range of operations, upon the gradual strengthening in English hands of the foundations that supported this commanding position, were built up the first stages of English ascendancy in the East. The constitution of these great commercial associations resembled in many respects that of the proprietary Colonies which laid the foundation of such States as Maryland and Pennsylvania in North America[1]. The proprietary bodies appointed the governor and council, and were in fact invested with a kind of autonomy under the general authority of the Sovereign; they had many of the attributes, without much of the responsibility, of dependent States. It had become abundantly clear that this organization of a Chartered Company, with powers of internal control and self-defence, possessing in some degree the resources, administrative traditions, the unity of plan

[1] 'The united proprietary representative sovereignty of the lands of Bengal is virtually in right, possession, fact, and relative circumstances, but on a large imperial scale, almost precisely what private territorial property was in some provinces of North America, with respect to local or more extensive national interests of the high ruling protecting State of Great Britain, and differing only in the descriptive terms of conquered and colonized dependencies.'—Grant's *Analysis.*

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and purpose, the larger interests and relative responsibilities of a local government, was necessary to the existence of the English commerce in Asia, where we had then no diplomatic representatives, and many dangerous rivals. The Dutch held at this time 'one hundred and seventy fortified stations in India[1];' they had seized, in 1683, the valuable position of Bantam, which gave them a virtual monopoly of the pepper trade from the islands. The English Company had before them the example of the Dutch, who had adopted from the Portuguese the policy of making their settlements self-protective by fortifications and strong garrisons, of acquiring territory, and of treating their acquisitions, not as grants held by traders on sufferance from the nearest Oriental potentate, but as possessions held under direct or delegated authority from the sovereign European power. They saw that they could only maintain their ground by imitating this example; and henceforward their establishments were more and more framed and directed upon this model.

Section II. *The united East India Company.*

The union of the two Indian Companies of London, which was effected in 1702, just before the great war of the Spanish succession[2], and immediately after the accession of Queen Anne, concentrated all the enterprize, capital, and maritime experience of one powerful corporation upon the consolidation of our position in South Asia. The East India Company, by whom

[1] Bruce, *Annals*, ii. 586.

[2] Death of William III, March 1702. Union of the two companies, April 1702. Declaration of war against France, May 1702.

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our Indian affairs were administered for the next 155 years, were now backed by the most opulent city and the largest seafaring population in the world, by the favour of the English Government, to whom they made liberal advances, and by the increasing influence of the commercial classes upon the politics of the country. With these advantages, with a secure base and head-quarters at home, with fortified settlements and armed shipping abroad, with a Charter authorizing them to raise troops and to make war and peace in India, the Company were already capable of defending themselves and even of pushing forward their outposts against any opposition that could be made by the Viceroys of a distracted Oriental empire. The history of Venice and Genoa had already shown what might be achieved by the power of armed commerce in the hands of small communities greatly superior in wealth and civilization to their neighbours. These towns had grown into independent States by successful monopoly of the Asiatic trade in the European waters; they were originally no stronger than a chartered English Company of the seventeenth century. The decadence of the Byzantine empire enabled the Italian cities to supplant the Greeks in the Levant, to acquire and fortify the islands and other points of vantage along the coasts, and thus to seize trade and territory in the Mediterranean very much as the Dutch and English established themselves in the Indian seas. Chios belonged entirely to a Genoese Company, whose rule for 220 years over several islands of the Greek archipelago bears a curious likeness, in miniature, to the territorial domination of the English

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East India Company. The ruins of strongholds and other signs of extinct Italian dominion are to be seen all along the shores of Greece and Asia Minor like the relics of the Dutch and Portuguese settlements on the Indian Ocean or the Persian Gulf. But neither Greeks nor Italians could resist the torrent of Asiatic conquest that came pouring across Asia from the East. The Italian republics had not the population, capital, or territorial resources sufficient for holding their scattered possessions against the fleets and armies of the Ottoman empire; their territory on the Italian mainland was constantly threatened by powerful neighbours; and the diversion of the Asiatic trade was drying up the springs of their prosperity. Nevertheless, when we consider how much was accomplished by these small trading States so long as the field lay open to them, and even while they were confronted by the Turkish power in its full strength on the mainland, we may moderate our astonishment at the fact that the foundations of a great empire in India could be laid by an English trading Company, at a time when the Moghul empire was rapidly waning, and England was waxing to the plenitude of her maritime supremacy. It is true that the Levant and Greece lay adjacent to Venice and Genoa, while between India and England lay six months of sea voyage. But this distance favoured the plantation of our dominion by keeping Indian affairs at the beginning outside the sphere of European politics; and latterly it became an advantage to the nation that could give its commercial colonies a secure base at home, and could hold the sea against all rivals.

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In this situation it might have been foreseen without much difficulty that as decay subsided into dilapidation all over the Moghul empire, the vigorous European settlements on the coasts of India would enlarge their borders and affirm their independence. When in 1672 Leibnitz advised Louis XIV not to attack Holland, but to seize Egypt as the stepping-stone to a great Asiatic dominion, he wrote, truly, that 'the extreme feebleness of the Orientals is no longer a secret;' and India was now certainly the weakest, perhaps also still the wealthiest, part of South Asia. The quarrels and embarrassments of the local governors already prevented them from paying much attention to trading factories, except when money was to be extorted or assistance needed. It was clearly as probable that the native usurpers and adventurers who were rising into power would seek aid from the Companies as that they would afford them protection or subject them to control; they were more likely, in this manner, to throw open India to the foreigner than to bar the doors against him. From such circumstances two consequences might be fairly inferred; first, that the power of the foreign Companies would steadily expand so long as they could rely on their communications with Europe; secondly, that commercial jealousies in Asia and national antipathies in Europe would before long bring the expanding Companies into collision with each other. Lastly, it might be predicted that whenever this collision should occur, the Company that succeeded in overthrowing its European antagonist would have little to fear from native adversaries, and would have attained an incontestable ascendancy in the adjoining provinces of India.

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Up to this time, nevertheless, the policy of the French and English had remained strictly commercial, in the sense that all their plans and proceedings for settling upon the Indian coasts were designed in the interests of trade. We are now approaching the period when the growing strength of their position, the weakness of the Indian governments, the increasing keenness and impulse of competition, and above all the violent quarrels between France and England in Europe, combined to transform the commercial rivalry into an armed contest for political ascendancy. For some twenty years South India became a battlefield of two distant European nations; the war of succession in Austria was made a pretext for taking sides in a dispute over the heritage of the Nizám of Hyderabad; and Indian affairs were entangled in the prolonged struggle between France and England for colonial and naval superiority. When England at the close of that struggle was eventually left mistress of the situation, she found thrown wide open before her the gates leading to immense territorial possessions, and to the consolidation of an Asiatic dominion which is perhaps the most eminent and valuable legacy bequeathed to us by our forefathers in the eighteenth century.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANIES.

SECTION I. *State of India* (1707–1740).

THE death of the Spanish king in 1702 had been the signal for a war that ended with a partition of the Spanish monarchy and a general political resettlement of Europe. So with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 began the disruption of the Moghul empire, followed by a material disturbance of the political system of Asia. The commotion and territorial derangements that were now spreading through the central regions of Asia were evident premonitory tokens of the instability and approaching downfall of the two great dynasties that had ruled Persia and India from the middle of the sixteenth century; the long stationary period was drawing to its end, and an era of great conquests was reappearing.

There was nothing unusual in the civil war that broke out on the Moghul emperor's death: for the title to a vacant Indian throne was ordinarily determined by the sword; every ruler of the imperial house had fought in turn for his heritage; and in fact the dynasty had owed its strength to the severe competitive trials in which each

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successor had proved his capacity for kingship. But as Aurangzeb died at a great age the contest had been long foreseen and deliberately prepared for. He left his dominions in confusion, with a formidable revolt spreading among the Marathas; his empire was unwieldy and overgrown, and this time the struggle among his heirs brought out no successor capable of holding together the ill-joined provinces and discordant races. The freebooting companies of the Maratha chiefs soon developed into roving armies that overran the central and western regions. The great Viceroyalty of the southern provinces was converted into an independent principality under the Nizám. Bengal, the richest province of India, fell away under an Afghan adventurer; the Sikhs were rising in the Punjab; a powerful official was founding his dynasty in Oudh; and various usurpers were setting themselves up in the remoter districts. The dominion which had been planted in the sixteenth century by the vigour and audacity of Báber and his freelances from the Oxus was now subsiding into emasculate debility. During the flourishing period of the Moghul empire its outposts were at Kábul and Kandahar; but towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign his garrisons had been driven out of Afghanistan. As the maintenance of a strong north-west frontier has always been essential to the peace of India, the divorce of Afghanistan from the rulership of the Indian plains was invariably the signal for the recurrence of chronic invasions from Central Asia. Thirty years after Aurangzéb's decease Nádir Shah, the Persian soldier of fortune, who had overturned the ruling dynasty in Persia, came down through the Afghan passes with a

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great army. He sacked Delhi[1], added one more massacre to the bloodstained annals of that ill-fated city, wrenched away from the imperial crown all its possessions west of the Indus, and departed home leaving the Moghul government, which had received its death-blow, in a state of mortal collapse. The barriers having been thus broken down, Ahmed Shah, of the Abdallee tribe of the Afghans, followed two years later. When Nádir Shah had been assassinated in his camp Ahmed Shah rode off eastward to conquer Afghanistan; and from that base he seized the whole Punjab in 1748. From the south-west the Marathas spread over central India like a devastating flood; and wherever the land had been levelled flat by the steam roller of absolutism, wherever the minor rulerships and petty States had been crushed out by the empire, the whole country was now easily overrun and broken up into anarchy. The different provinces and viceroyalties went their own natural way; they were parcelled out in a scuffle among revolted governors, rebellious chiefs, leaders of insurgent tribes or sects, religious revivalists, or captains of mercenary bands. The Indian people were becoming a masterless multitude swaying to and fro in the political storm, and clinging to any power, natural or supernatural, that seemed likely to protect them. They were prepared to acquiesce in the assumption of authority by any one who could show himself able to discharge the most elementary functions of government in the preservation of life and property. In short, the

[1] March, 1738.

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people were scattered without a leader or protector; while the political system under which they had long lived was disappearing in complete disorganization.

Section II. *The French and English in South India* (1715–1749).

It was during this period of tumultuary confusion that the French and English first appeared upon the political arena in India. At the beginning of the eighteenth century one of the chief currents of maritime enterprise had begun, after some fluctuation, to set strongly and decisively from Europe eastward across the ocean, bearing on its rising wave the ships of the two nations that had by this time left far behind the earlier European competitors. The Portuguese, who had started first by priority of discovery, were now at a standstill far in the rear. The Dutch, who followed, had wrested from the Portuguese most of their trade and territory, but the strength of Holland had been effectively broken by the incessant attacks of France, who had been good enough thus to relieve England of her most capable maritime rival. From the beginning of the eighteenth century the grasp of the Dutch upon points along the Indian coast becomes gradually relaxed; they relinquish the contest for predominance in that region, and their principal trading stations are shifted south-eastward to Ceylon, Java, Borneo, and the Spice Islands. The Danish East India Company was extinguished in 1728. In 1722 the Emperor of Austria had granted to the merchants of the Austrian Netherlands a charter authorizing the Ostend East India Company to trade, fit out armed vessels,

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build forts, and make treaties with Indian princes; but this interference with their trade alarmed and excited the maritime powers. England, France, and Holland united in diplomatic protests and threats of armed resistance to its establishment in the East Indies, until the Emperor finally agreed by treaty to suppress the Ostend Company totally. The French, on the other hand, were gradually gaining ground and strengthening their position in India; for although they had been much enfeebled by the disastrous European wars that ended in 1713, their resources and their enterprising spirit revived during the tranquil interval of the next thirty years.

The speculative mania that supervened in France at the beginning of this long peace had involved her East India Company in some dangerous vicissitudes. They had been first absorbed in a gigantic Company of the Indies with exclusive right of trade on the African coast as well as on the shores of the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. The next step was to place this Company in charge of the famous Land Bank, with Law as Inspector-General over all their business, commercial and financial. The inevitable result was enormous inflation of the shares and operations, followed by a sharp and ruinous collapse; nor did the Company right themselves until after a royal decree had cut away autocratically all their liabilities, when they again confined themselves to the East India trade. Their situation in the Indian waters now began rapidly to improve. In 1715 they had occupied the important island of Mauritius (abandoned by the Dutch), and were steadily taking up their ground side by side with the

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English on the south-eastern or Coromandel coast of India, where Pondicherry, the seat of the Governor-General of all the French settlements, was developing into a fine town with 70,000 inhabitants. The earlier governors, Lenoir and Dumas, managed the Company's affairs with prudence and sagacity. Dupleix, who followed them, was a man of larger calibre, full of energy and ambition, who had distinguished himself as chief of the French factory at Chandernagore on the Hooghly river. When, in 1741, he was appointed to succeed Dumas in the governorship of Pondicherry, with supreme civil and military authority in the settlement, he lost no time in developing his bold and high-reaching projects for the promotion of his Company's interests.

In this manner it came to pass that, after the great settlement of Europe which was accomplished at the Peace of Utrecht, France and England alone faced each other as serious competitors for the prize of Indian Commerce, having distanced or disabled all other candidates. Not only in the East, but in the West, the commercial and colonial rivalry between the two foremost maritime nations of Europe had reached its climax towards the middle of the eighteenth century. The colonial quarrel was fought out, as we know, in North America; the field on which the two nations met to contend for what was at that time the most valuable sea-borne trade in the world, was India. And from this time forward the really potent element in Asiatic politics, which has since transformed and may again dominate the whole situation, is the political rivalry and rapidly increasing ascendancy of the European Powers.

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The contest began in a spirit of keen but pacific commercial rivalry; for the combined exertions of two able Ministers, Walpole and Fleury, had kept England and France on friendly terms up to about 1740. Each nation was represented in India by a substantial and well-equipped Company, which kept to their business, established factories and agencies, and concerned themselves very slightly about the internal affairs of the State or province within whose jurisdiction they were settled. The circumstances and constitution of the two bodies reflected the differences of national character and political conditions then prevailing between the two mother countries. In France the East India Company were closely connected with the Government; they farmed monopolies, received Treasury grants and subsidies; they were usually deep in the State's debt, and were consequently at the mercy of the Crown. From the year 1723 their Directors had been appointed by the king, whose officers exercised such constant control over the management that, as the Company declared afterward, the interference of the government was the cause of all their misfortunes. Under an able minister who might have paid serious attention to Indian affairs, it is quite possible that the administration of the French Company might have been directed on larger political principles and pursued with more force and consistency of aim, than could be expected from a private mercantile association. But as the government of Louis XV soon began to sink under the embarrassments, vices, and misfortunes of incapable rulership, its official patronage proved fatal to the Company that depended on it,

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The English Company, on the other hand, were so far from being in debt to their Government, that they had made large loans and contributions to the public treasury; they trusted not to official favour but to parliamentary influence in transacting business with the Crown; and as they were left to manage their own affairs the greater responsibility thrown upon their chiefs produced in the long-run a body of sound and experienced administrators, guided by long tradition, well versed in foreign trade, and backed by the overflowing capital of a great mercantile community.

In India the means and resources of the two Companies were, at the outset, fairly equal. The settlements on the Coromandel coast were not only important as points of attraction for the inland commerce; they were also valuable as entrepôts for the general traffic on both sides of the Bay of Bengal, and as naval stations for the protection of the thriving trade with the Malacca Straits and Eastern Asia; Ceylon being then possessed by the Dutch. Moreover, since the decay at the heart of the Moghul empire was felt soonest at its extremities, the distant provinces had already begun to fall away into confusion. The settlements in the far south of India were thus becoming more independent of the imperial authorities than the factories in Bengal, which were up the estuary of a river with forts below them toward the sea, and where the province was still under effective government. On the west side of India the Marathas, who held most of the districts along the sea-shore, were by this time strong enough to keep foreign traders within bounds. On the

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south-east or Coromandel coast, Madras and Pondicherry, the headquarters of the French and English Companies, were fortified and fairly armed places upon open roadsteads, lying within the governorship of the Carnatic, which was the name for a large province attached to the Viceroyalty of the Dekhan, that is, of South India. This Viceroyalty had been conferred by the Emperor upon Ásaf Jáh, with the title of Nizám-ul-mulk, who soon made himself so powerful as to excite alarm and jealousy at the Imperial Court. When, however, an attempt was made to remove him, the Nizám, who had been summoned to Delhi, marched back into the Dekhan with an army, defeated the officer sent to replace him, established his authority in the south, and became the most powerful feudatory of the empire. A few years later he took advantage of the disorganization caused by Nádir Shah's irruption into North India to consolidate his great possessions south of the Nerbudda, including the Carnatic, into an hereditary rulership, owning a nominal allegiance to Delhi, but in fact entirely independent. In the Carnatic, which had been a governorship under the Dekhan Viceroyalty, a kind of subordinate principality had similarly been established by one Saadut Ullah, but on his death the succession was disputed; and the disorders that ensued, though they were temporarily suppressed by the Nizám, necessarily weakened local authority in the country round the English and French settlements. It was here that the French and English came to blows in 1745, as soon as the news reached India of a declaration of war between France and England. And from this outbreak of hostilities is

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to be dated the first crossing of swords on Indian soil in a national duel which lasted, with short intervals, for eighteen years, until one of the combatants was disarmed and virtually driven off the field.

When, in 1741, Dupleix was appointed Director-General of the affairs of the French East India Company, he succeeded to an office that had been held by two predecessors of character and capacity, who had shown great tact and judgment in their dealings with the native powers. Mahé and Karikal had been quietly acquired for France; and during the confusion into which the whole Carnatic was thrown by the Maratha invasion in 1740, the Mahomedan princes had found shelter for their families and treasures behind the walls of Pondicherry. But the plans and aims of the French had not travelled beyond the security and extension of their commerce, until the stirring and ambitious spirit of Dupleix, who made no secret of his opinion that the French temperament was better suited for conquest than for commerce, led the Company into a more adventurous field of action. He foresaw that in the event of war with England the rising jealousy between the two Companies would kindle hostilities in India. So he began to negotiate with the neighbouring chiefs, to assume titles granted under the imperial patent, and to imitate the solemn ostentation of Indian grandees, with the object of preparing the way toward a place for his Company in the political system of the country. He spared no pains to reform his military establishments and to fortify Pondicherry against the contingency of an attack from the sea; nor did he desist when the Directors of

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the Company at Paris ordered him to suspend all expenditure on defensive works, to pay the Company's debts, and attend to their trade.

Then, in 1744, came the declaration of war which gave the signal for beginning the first act of a dramatic contest that was to determine the issue whether France or England should win a great dominion in South Asia. We have to bear in mind that this issue did not depend, as some writers have imagined, upon the petty fighting that ensued along the Coromandel coast, or on the success or failure of their rival alliances and intrigues with Oriental princes. The issue was determined, in reality, by the result of the struggle between these two nations for superiority on all the seas. Nevertheless, although the story of the Indian contest is but an episode of that grand international drama, played out in the next fifty years with many changes of scene and character, it is interesting, instructive, and of the highest importance for a proper understanding of the events and causes which threw open before the English the way to ascendancy in India, and which lie at the base of their success.

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CHAPTER V.

THE FRENCH IN INDIA UNDER DUPLEIX.

SECTION I. *War between France and England.*

IN 1744, when the war between France and England broke out, Labourdonnais was at the Mauritius with a squadron, ready to fall upon the English commerce, or to attack their Indian stations. But the French Company, hoping to preserve neutrality in the East Indies, held him back, until in 1745 a British fleet appeared off Pondicherry, which had a weak garrison and unfinished fortifications. Dupleix, in order to gain time, induced the Nawáb of the Carnatic to interpose with an order forbidding hostilities within his jurisdiction; and in deference to this prohibition the English commander was persuaded by the authorities at Madras to suspend his attack. The stormy season compelled him to leave the coast; but when the British fleet returned next year it was met by the French squadron from the Mauritius. The English Company now in their turn appealed to the Nawáb, but they found him lukewarm; he had not been properly bribed; his own position was insecure; nor was it in any case possible for him to prevent the two hostile

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fleets from fighting or bombarding each other's factories on the sea-shore; and after an indecisive naval action the English ships withdrew to Ceylon. Labourdonnais now landed some two thousand men, and Madras was besieged by land and sea, until it was surrendered on terms permitting the English to regain their town on payment of a ransom. But this compromise was violently opposed by Dupleix, who saw plainly enough that to build up solidly a French dominion in India he must begin by clearing away the English, and who therefore insisted that Madras should be razed to the ground. The Nawáb of the Carnatic also interposed on his side, professing much indignation at this private war within his sovereignty, and demanding that the town should be given up to him, which Dupleix promised to do. After a sharp quarrel over this question Labourdonnais, whose fleet was shattered by a tremendous storm, sailed back with the surviving ships to the Mauritius, leaving the French in temporary possession of Madras, under an agreement, made by Labourdonnais, that if the ransom were paid it should be restored to the English within three months.

The next incident was important. Dupleix, who had now 3000 French soldiers at his disposal, and who had been positively ordered by a secret despatch from his government on no account to give up Madras, had not the least intention of relinquishing it either to the Nawáb or the English Company. When the Nawáb invested the town Dupleix drove off the native troops so effectually as to establish, at one blow, an immense military reputation for the French in the Carnatic, since the ease and

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rapidity with which the Nawáb's army was dispersed at this first collision between the regular battalions of Europe and the loose Indian levies proved at once the formidable quality of European arms and discipline. Dupleix made unsparing and audacious use of his advantage; he declared null and void the agreement with the English, seized all the Company's property, carried the Madras governor and his officers to Pondicherry, where they figured as captives in a triumphal procession, and marched with a large force against the English fortress of St. David. Very soon, however, the tide began to turn; Fort St. David held out until the arrival of a strong English fleet forced the French to raise the blockade hastily, and to retire upon Pondicherry, which was in its turn blockaded. But as the French had failed before Fort St. David, so the English failed before Pondicherry; the place was so clumsily besieged by the English and so gallantly defended by the French that the assailants had at last to draw off with serious loss.

In 1749 the news of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle stopped the fighting in India, and restored Madras to the English in exchange for the restitution of Louisburg in North America to the French. The chief outcome of this sharp wrestle between the two Companies at close quarters on a narrow strip of sea-coast, was a notable augmentation of the French prestige in India, and great encouragement to Dupleix in his project of employing his troops as irresistible auxiliaries to any native prince whose cause he might choose to adopt. He was already in close correspondence with one of the parties in the

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civil war that was just beginning to spread over the Carnatic; he took care to keep on foot his disciplined troops, whose decisive value in the field had now been abundantly manifested; he had overawed the neighbouring chiefs, depressed the English credit, and seemed to have struck out with the boldness and perspicacity of political genius the straight way toward establishing a French dominion in the Indian peninsula.

So far as it related to facts and circumstances on the Coromandel coast, his judgment of the situation was correct; the opportunity had come and Dupleix had discerned the right methods of using it. The Moghul empire had finally disappeared in all the southern provinces; the whole realm was torn by internal dissensions; the Marathas, whose mission it was to prepare the way for a foreign domination by riding down and ruining all the Mahomedan powers, were spoiling the country and bleeding away its strength; the native armies in the south were no better than irregular ill-armed hordes of mercenaries; the coasts lay open and defenceless. Not only Dupleix, but others (as will be shown later on) were beginning to see the practicability of turning this state of things to the advantage of some European power. But Dupleix had not perceived or taken into account certain larger considerations which must control the working out of his ambitious schemes, and which soon began to counterbalance his local successes. Any plan of establishing the territorial supremacy in India of a maritime European power must be fundamentally defective, must necessarily suffer from dangerous constitutional weakness, so long as it does not rest upon a secure line of communication

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by sea. Until this prime condition of stability is fulfilled, the aggrandisement of dominion in a distant land only places a heavier and more perilous strain on the weak supports, and the whole fabric is liable to be toppled over by a stroke at its base.

No quarter is given by French writers to Labourdonnais, who is accused of having thwarted the thorough-going designs of Dupleix by the half-hearted measure of holding Madras to ransom, by refusing to co-operate energetically in the extirpation of the English settlements, and by sailing away to the Mauritius, so that the coast was left clear for the enemy. On his return to France he was thrown into the Bastille, where he remained three years, though in the end he was honourably acquitted. His quarrel with Dupleix, who was imperious and uncompromising, may have had much to do with his hasty departure from the Indian sea-board. But it is more than doubtful whether, if Labourdonnais had kept his shattered squadron in those waters, he could have held that command of the sea without which all the triumphs of Dupleix over the petty forts on the coast, or over the loose levies of Indian princes, were radically futile.

However this may be, it soon became evident that success on the land would follow superiority at sea. When, after the departure of Labourdonnais, an English fleet appeared on the scene, the French operations were soon paralysed, and they were driven back into Pondicherry so easily that Dupleix might have taken warning of his insecurity. But either he missed the significance of sea power, or he committed the mistake of imagining that

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he could shelter himself from naval attacks by carrying his conquests inland, forgetting that the roots of any European dominion in Asia must always be firmly planted in the fatherland. The experience of this first war seems to have brought him nothing but encouragement, for so soon as peace had been proclaimed at home he lost no time in prosecuting his schemes on a larger scale.

We have to remember, in any case, that Dupleix cannot be supposed to have known the relative strength of the maritime nations, or the conditions to which the naval forces of France had been reduced by the war of the Austrian succession. The English had spent immense sums of money, but their navy had greatly increased in power and capacity; it had attained a clear superiority over the French everywhere; and notwithstanding some reverses it was far more than a match for the enemy in Indian waters. The resources of Holland were exhausted, and she was threatened by imminent invasion, when peace was signed. As for France, her victories in the Low Countries had brought her no substantial profit and much positive loss; for the damage done to Holland by the war told entirely in favour of England's commercial preponderance; while at sea her trade and marine had suffered so heavily, and her naval material at home was so completely spent, that according to Voltaire she had no warships left. Such national destitution must have severely affected any great trading enterprise; it was particularly damaging to the interests of the French East India Company which were directly associated with the fortunes of the State. At the end of the war the Company found themselves deep in debt; their Directors,

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all nominees of the Crown, had been profuse in expenditure, concealed the real state of their affairs, and endeavoured to bolster up their credit by magnificent but fictitious dividends, until after 1746 their embarrassments compelled them to make sudden and startling reductions.

The remedy of the French ministers, whenever anything seemed going wrong with their Company, was to appoint special Commissioners to supervise the Direction, notwithstanding the Company's protests that all their misfortunes were due to over-interference. In England the East India Company's administration was managed independently by great merchants, with a long traditional experience of Asiatic affairs, with a strong parliamentary connexion, with a very extensive business all over the East, and a large reserve of capital. In a comparison of the two systems we find on the French side of the Channel a Company propped up by lottery privileges and tobacco monopolies, subsisting on grants in aid from the treasury. On the English side we have a rich corporation making annual loans to the Government in aid of war expenses, insomuch that in 1749 the debt owing to the Company amounted to £4,200,000; borrowing millions at a very low interest, and using this great financial leverage to obtain from the Ministers exclusive privileges and the extension of their Charter. In England the superior wealth and naval instincts of the nation were directed with all the energy and active play of free institutions; in France the natural ability and enterprise of a courageous and quick-witted people were fatally hampered by a despotic bureaucracy, by growing financial confusion, and by all the evils of negligent misrule.

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Section II. *War between the two Companies.*

To Dupleix in India these things could not be discernible; he saw that his improved position and the increase of his troops gave ample scope to his patriotic ambition; and he now launched out hardily upon the troubled and hitherto unexplored sea of Indian politics. Although the last war had not altered the relative situations of either Company, its effect had been to change their character and to deepen the colour of their rivalry; they had both acquired a taste for Oriental war and intrigue; they had each raised a military force which mutual jealousy prevented them from disbanding, though it was very costly to maintain. The problem of keeping up a standing army without paying for it out of revenue is occasionally solved by an impecunious State at the cost of its neighbours; but there is also the alternative, well-known in Indian history, of lending your army for a consideration. The French and English in India could not make direct war on each other while the peace lasted in Europe; they could only prepare for the next rupture by manœuvring against each other politically, by husbanding their forces, extending their spheres of influence, and aiming back strokes indirectly at each other under cover of the *mêlée* that was going on in the country round them. There was thus everything to invite and nothing to prevent their taking a hand in the incessant fighting for independence and territory among the princes and chiefs who had now discovered the weight of European metal on the war-field, and were quite ready to pay handsomely for a temporary loan of it. The Companies, indeed, found little difficulty in striking a bargain with

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men whose best title to rulership was their power to take and hold, whose life and the existence of their principality were continually staked upon the issue of a single battle; capable usurpers with no right; rightful heirs with no capacity; military leaders who had seized a few districts; Maratha captains or Afghan adventurers at the head of some thousand horsemen; provincial Viceroys who were trying to found dynasties. None of these rivals could afford to look far ahead or to concern themselves, in the face of emergent needs, with the inevitable consequences of calling in the armed European.

The two Companies, on the other hand, were under an irresistible temptation drawing them toward proposals that offered pay and employment for troops that they could not yet use against each other, with the prospect of large profits upon the campaign, extension of trade privileges or even territory, and the chance of doing some material damage to a rival. It must be admitted that the first who yielded to this temptation were the English, when they took up the cause of a Rája who had been expelled by his brother from the Maratha kingdom of Tanjore. But the expedition sent to reinstate him managed matters so badly that the Company were well content to withdraw it on payment of their war expenditure in addition to a small cession of land. This was not only a military failure but a political blunder; since the Tanjore intervention furnished Dupleix with an excellent precedent for taking part in the quarrels of the native rulers, precisely at a moment when he was meditating similar designs of a

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much more important and far-reaching character. He was now ready to develop his policy of assuring the ascendancy of France upon a system of armed intervention among the candidates who were preparing to settle by the sword the open question of the succession to rulership in South India.

His opportunity came with the death of Ásaf Jáh, the first Nizám, founder of the dynasty that still reigns over a large territory at Hyderabad. Ásaf Jáh's succession was disputed between his son Násir Jung and his grandson Mustapha Jung, who both took up arms; whereupon the Carnatic, which had only been kept quiet by Ásaf Jáh's power of enforcing his authority, became at once the scene of a violent conflict between rival claimants for the subordinate rulership. The entanglement of these two wars of succession threw all South India into confusion, producing that complicated series of intrigues, conspiracies, assassinations, battles, sieges, and desultory skirmishing, that is known in Anglo-Indian history as the War in the Carnatic. The whole narrative, in copious and authentic detail, is to be read in Orme's History under the title of 'The War of Coromandel,' which records the admirable exploits of Clive, Lawrence, and some other stout-hearted but utterly forgotten Englishmen, who at great odds and with small means sustained the fortunes of their country in a hazardous predicament by their bravery and steadfast perseverance.

Into this medley Dupleix plunged promptly and boldly. His immediate aim was to establish in the Carnatic, the province within whose jurisdiction lay both Madras

and Pondicherry, a ruler who should be dependent on the French connexion. His ulterior object was the creation of a preponderant French party at the court of the Nizám himself, to whom the Carnatic was still nominally subordinate; and by these two steps he hoped to attain a firm dominion for his nation in India. The English Company, who at first expected that the Treaty of 1748 would relieve them from the hostility of France, soon discovered that they were in greater danger than before; for the peace enabled Dupleix to employ his forces in giving such material assistance to Chunda Sahib, one of the competitors for the Carnatic, that the ruling Nawáb, Anwarudin Khan, was speedily attacked, defeated, and slain. The victorious Chunda Sahib joined forces with Mozuffur Jung, who was contending for the Nizámship; and both marched to Pondicherry, where they were received magnificently by the French, to whom they made a substantial grant of territory, with special allotments to Monsieur and Madame Dupleix. The French were now openly supporting Mozuffur Jung for the Nizámship of the Dekhan, and Chunda Sahib for the Nawábship of the Carnatic.

The English, who regarded these proceedings with considerable dismay, although their own behaviour at Tanjore made protest embarrassing, became involved in an acrimonious correspondence with the French, leading obviously to a rupture. Their position, which was now seriously threatened, left them no alternative but to take the side opposed to the French candidates in this double war of succession. When Dupleix sent out a strong contingent in support of Mozuffur Jung, Násir Jung,

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his opponent, appealed to the English, who after some hesitation supplied a body of 600 men, and also assisted Mahomed Ali, whom Násir Jung had appointed to contest the Carnatic Nawábship against Chunda Sahib. Thus Násir Jung and Mahomed Ali were supported by the English for the Nizámship and the Carnatic, against Mozuffur Jung and Chunda Sahib who were backed by the French.

The English Company also sent home urgent requisition for succour, representing to their Directors that the French had 'struck at the ruin of your settlements, possessed themselves of several large districts, planted their colours on the very edge of your bounds, and were endeavouring to surround your settlements in such manner as to prevent either provisions or merchandize being brought to us.' The murder of Násir Jung by his own mercenaries seemed indeed to secure the triumph of the French cause; for Mozuffur Jung, whom Dupleix was assisting, was thereby placed, for the moment, in undisputed possession of the Nizámship; while Chunda Sahib with his French auxiliaries became irresistible in the Carnatic, where only the strong fortress of Trichinopoly held out against him.

It would be very difficult to describe briefly and yet clearly the intricate scrambling campaigns that followed, in which the French and English on either side played the leading parts, for the result of every important action depended on the European contingents engaged. While their troops exchanged volleys in the field, the two Companies exchanged bitter recriminations from Madras and Pondicherry, accusing each other of breaches of interna-

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tional law, denouncing one another's manœuvres, and imploring their respective governments at home to interpose against each other's total disregard of common political morality. The French troops had carried the Carnatic for their candidate, had sent Bussy with Mozuffur Jung to establish him at Hyderabad, and seemed in a fair way towards general success. The English had thrown a reinforcement into Trichinopoly, where Mahomed Ali defended himself steadily against Chunda Sahib; but the fortress was beleaguered by a greatly superior army, with a strong French contingent; and it was only saved when Clive made an effective diversion by his daring seizure of the capital of the Carnatic, Arcot. From this moment the tide began to turn. A large division of the besieging army, despatched from Trichinopoly to retake Arcot, made some fierce assaults that were repulsed by the desperate valour of Clive's scanty garrison, who made such an obstinate stand behind very feeble defences that the attempt had to be abandoned. Then the English and their allies, led by Clive and Lawrence, took the open field against their enemy, cut off the French communications, dispersed Chunda Sahib's army, captured the French officers, and completely relieved Trichinopoly. Chunda Sahib was murdered by the Marathas who had joined Mahomed Ali; and Mozuffur Jung was killed in a skirmish on his march towards Hyderabad.

Meanwhile Bussy had established himself at Hyderabad, where he had set up a Nizám, had organized a complete *corps d'armée* under his own command; and had made himself so much too powerful for the native government that he necessarily provoked much jealousy,

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enmity, and plotting against him. Having succeeded, nevertheless, by great dexterity and firmness in maintaining his position, he obtained from the Nizám an assignment of four rich districts lying along the eastern coast above the Carnatic, still called the Northern Sirkars, which yielded ample revenue for the payment of his troops. Yet Bussy well knew that his footing at Hyderabad, far inland, was isolated and precarious, dependent entirely on a semi-mutinous army under a few French officers. He had therefore consistently advised making peace with the English; and now the campaign in the Carnatic was visibly turning against Dupleix, who had no military commander there to match against Clive and Lawrence.

Dupleix was beginning to find that practice was making the English no worse players than his own side at the game which he had himself introduced. The whole strength of the French had been exerted, and vainly exhausted, against Trichinopoly; the protracted siege had brought them nothing but disaster. Not only his native allies but also the French Government at home were losing their former confidence in Dupleix; for his policy may be said to have broken down when the French candidates for rulership were worsted, and when after some years of heavy expenditure on these irregular hostilities the results fell so far short of the expectations that he had raised. As his policy fell into disrepute, he had been naturally led to disguise the real condition of the Company's finances; so when the Directors were suddenly advised from Pondicherry that they were two millions of francs in debt, they determined at once to recall him. The English Company at home

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had long been pressing their government to protest diplomatically against this illegitimate system of private war, and against all the proceedings in India of Dupleix, whose manifest object they declared to be the extirpation of their settlements. They urged that 'the trade carried on by the East India Company is the trade of the English nation in the East Indies, and so far a National concern;' that the French power was growing, and that Dupleix had laid claim to the whole south-eastern coast, from Cape Comorin to the river Kistna.

The French ministry, on the other hand, did not care to embroil themselves with England, whose sea power was dangerous to all their colonies, on account of these apparently interminable Indian quarrels; their finances were low; they had good reasons for honestly desiring to substitute pacific for warlike relations between the two Companies, and to agree upon a mutual return to the old commercial business. So in 1754 they deputed to Pondicherry M. Godeheu, who superseded Dupleix, and concluded with the English governor, Saunders, first, a suspension of arms; secondly, a provisional treaty, afterwards ratified, whereby the Companies bound themselves not to renew attempts at territorial aggrandisement, and covenanted to retain only a few places at districts stipulated in the treaty. Dupleix, like Labourdonnais before him, was recalled to France, where he died in poverty and discredit.

Section III. *Policy of Dupleix examined.*

It has been usual to regard this treaty arrangement, which put an end to the unofficial war between the two

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Indian Companies, as the turning-point of the fortunes of France in the East Indies. The abandonment of the policy of Dupleix has been freely censured as short-sighted and pusillanimous, particularly by recent French writers. The French Government is accused of throwing up a game that had been nearly won, and of deserting in the hour of his need the man whose genius had engendered the first conception of founding a great European empire in India, who showed not only the possibility of the achievement but the right method of accomplishing it. We are told that England, in conquering India, has had but to follow the path that the genius of France opened out to her[1]. James Mill, in summarizing the causes why the English succeeded, says that the two important discoveries for conquering India were, first, the weakness of the native armies against European discipline, and, secondly, the facility of imparting that discipline to natives in the service of Europeans. He adds—'Both these discoveries were made by the French[2].' And almost all writers on Indian history have repeated this after him, insisting that the failure of Dupleix is to be ascribed to the ineffective co-operation on the part of the French naval officers, to the want of good military commanders, to accidents, bad luck at critical moments of the campaign, and above all to the faint-heartedness of the French ministry.

Now, it is quite true that Dupleix was a man of genius and far political vision, who strove gallantly against all these obstacles. On the other hand it is also true that in

[1] Xavier Raymond. [2] *History of British India.*

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Clive and Lawrence the English, with their usual good luck, had commanders superior to any of the French military officers with Dupleix, except Bussy. Bussy was a very able man, whom French historians delight to honour; but he was evidently intent, under Dupleix as afterwards under Lally, much more upon building up his own fortunes as a military dictator at Hyderabad than on sharing the unprofitable hard-hitting struggle between the two Companies in the Carnatic. We may heartily agree with Elphinstone that Dupleix was 'the first who made an extensive use of disciplined sepoys; the first who quitted the ports on the sea and marched an army into the heart of the continent; the first, above all, who discovered the illusion of the Moghul greatness.' Nevertheless, although it seems invidious to detract from the posthumous glory of a man so able and yet so unfortunate as Dupleix, he cannot be ranked as an original discoverer in Asiatic warfare and politics, without taking into account surrounding circumstances and conditions that naturally pointed to the use of methods which he rather developed than invented.

The weakness of all Oriental States and armies had long been known[1]; and India has always been, through natural causes, less capable than other great Asiatic

[1] 'L'extrême faiblesse des Orientaux n'est plus un secret' (Leibnitz, *Mémoire à Louis XIV*, 1672). Compare also the following extract from a letter dated August 1751, to the East India Company in England from their President at Fort St. David: 'The weakness of the Moors is now known, and it is certain any European Nation resolved to war on them with a tolerable force may overrun their whole country.'

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countries of resisting foreign invasion. Her indigenous population has rarely furnished armies that could encounter the inrush of the Central Asian hordes; and the only soldiers upon which the South Indian princes could rely were commonly mercenaries from the north. At the end of the seventeenth century the imperial troops were probably still the best in India; but Bernier writes that a division of Turenne's men would have made short work of the whole Moghul army; nor could any European of military experience have doubted that the loose levies of the Carnatic would be scattered by a few well-armed and disciplined battalions. Nor was there, in point of fact, any great novelty in the introduction by the French of the practice of drilling a few native regiments for their own service. The Moghul army had always contained some European officers, while within a very few years after the time of Dupleix the Maratha chiefs were forming trained regiments; and so soon as the European Companies began to engage in Indian wars, the expedient of giving discipline to the mercenaries who swarmed into their camps was too obviously necessary to rank as a discovery. The real discovery of the value of organized troops had to be made, not by Europeans who knew it already, but by the natives of India who had never before made trial of such tactics, or had met such bodies in the field.

But there is no need to attempt any detractation from the high credit fairly due to Dupleix for having first started on the right road towards European conquest in India. The more interesting question is why, with so much energy, ability, and patriotism, he made so little way.

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To those who maintain that, but for the blindness of the French government towards the ideas of Dupleix, the blunders of colleagues or subordinates, and the final disavowal of Dupleix, France might have supplanted England in India—the true answer is that these views betray a disregard of historic proportion, and an incomplete survey of the whole situation. They proceed on the narrow theory that extensive political changes may hang on the event of a small battle, or on the behaviour at some critical moment of a provincial general or governor. The strength and resources of France and England in their contests for the possession of empires are not to be measured after this fashion, or to be weighed in such nice balances. It may even be questioned whether the result of the confused irregular struggle between the two Companies in the Indian peninsula told decisively one way or the other upon the final event. The Carnatic war, being unofficial, was necessarily inconclusive, for neither French nor English dared openly to strike home at each other's settlements; while even if this had been done indirectly through native auxiliaries, the home governments must have interfered earlier. The system of private or auxiliary war gave Dupleix this temporary advantage against the English, that it was necessarily confined to the land, where he was the stronger; for as the two nations were at peace their fleets could not take part in it. On the outbreak of national hostilities three years later, the naval strength of England came into play with decisive effect.

Dupleix was a man of original and energetic political instincts, of an imperious and morally intrepid dispo-

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sition, who embarked upon wide and somewhat audacious schemes of Oriental dominion, and lost the stakes for which he played more through want of strength and continuous support than want of skill. He saw that so long as an European Company held their possessions or carried on trade at the pleasure of capricious and ephemeral Indian governments, the position was in the highest degree precarious. The right method, he argued, was to assert independence, to strike in for mastery, and to strike down any European rival who crossed his path; and if the English had not been too strong for him he might have succeeded. He made the commonplace mistake of affecting ostentatious display and resorting to astute intrigues in his dealings with the Indians; whereas a European should meet Orientals not with their weapons, but with his own. Nevertheless, he is the most striking figure in the short Indian episode of that long and arduous contest for transmarine dominion which was fought out between France and England in the eighteenth century, although it was far beyond his power to influence the ultimate destiny of either nation in India, and although the result of his plans was that 'we accomplished for ourselves against the French exactly everything that the French intended to accomplish for themselves against us[1].' It is certain, moreover, that the conception of an Indian empire had already been formed by others beside Dupleix, and that more than one clear-headed observer had perceived how easily the whole country might be subdued by an European power.

[1] Clive, *Letter to Lord Bute*, 1762.

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It is easy to understand that in 1753, when France and England determined to stop the fighting between their two Companies in India, they were actuated by the obvious expediency of terminating a protracted war between the representatives of two nations who were at peace in Europe, and of compelling their Indian governors to retire from politics and revert to trade. On the scene of action neither side had as yet gained any decisive advantage. In 1754 the French and English had both received reinforcements that brought their respective European forces up to about 2000 men each; but Orme says that the English troops were in quality so superior to the French that if hostilities had continued the English must have prevailed. The presence of an English squadron on the coast was also an argument, he observes, that inclined M. Godeheu toward pacific views. On the other hand, the French held a much larger territory than the English, and apparently a more considerable political connexion among the native States. The English governor at Madras, in transmitting to the London Board the provisional treaty he had made with Godeheu in 1754, warned his Company that the French were in an advantageous position for continuing hostilities; they had, he wrote, a stronger military force, and 'their influence with the country powers far exceeds ours.'

Yet the views and motives by which the French ministers were actuated are amply intelligible. The policy of Dupleix had been frustrated in the sense that, after four years of irregular warfare, he had brought the Company no nearer to the triumphant conclusion that was to compensate them for heavy military expenditure; while

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the English Company, though hard pressed, was by no means beaten; their troops were solid and well led, their finances in very fair condition. Dupleix might have gained ground, at best unstable and slippery, among the native princes; but in Europe the English government was remonstrating strenuously, and would certainly go beyond remonstrance whenever it should become manifest to the English people that their Indian trade and possessions were seriously menaced. The headquarters of each rival Company, at Madras and Pondicherry, lay along an open roadstead, completely exposed to attack by sea. The English fleet under Admiral Watson had just reached the coast, and the French government must have been conscious of the inferiority of its own navy. And since the treaty of 1754 maintained the French in possession of much larger territory on the Coromandel coast than was awarded to the English—while Bussy was still at Hyderabad with his division of 5000 well-disciplined troops—there was nothing, except the loss of Dupleix, in Godeheu's arrangement that could be said to have placed the French at a distinct disadvantage in India.

The French ministers were actuated, moreover, by the imperious and fundamental necessity of restoring their dilapidated finances; they could not, in justice to their over-taxed people, persist in the unsound and extravagant system of subsidising a commercial Company that had plunged into the quicksand of Indian wars. At that time it was an axiom in France, and even in England, that conquest was incompatible with commerce; the opinion of

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all French authorities, mercantile and administrative, was unanimous against allowing a trading Company to acquire large territory; and these views had for years been impressed sedulously, though in vain, upon Dupleix. The true state and inevitable tendency of the contest between the two nations in India has been recognised by M. Marion, in his study of the history of French finance between 1749 and 1754[1]. In defending Machault d'Arnouville, the Controller-General of that period, from the imputation of having sacrificed an empire in Asia by recalling Dupleix, he shows that if the French Government had retained his services and supported his policy, the ultimate event could not have been materially changed. The whole fabric of territorial predominance which Dupleix had been so industriously building up was loosely and hastily cemented; it depended upon the superiority of a few mercenary troops, the perilous friendship of Eastern princes, and the personal qualities of those in command on the spot. It was thus exposed to all the winds of fortune, and had no sure foundation.

The first thing needful before any solid dominion

[1] 'L'impuissance absolue d'un homme, quelqu'il soit, à triompher d'une grande nation qui veut vaincre, a été trop souvent mise en relief par l'histoire pour qu'il soit permis de conserver quelques illusions sur ce qu'eut été la lutte de Dupleix et des Anglais. La véritable faute du gouvernement français n'a pas été le rappel de Dupleix; elle a été de rendre impossible par le déficit, par le gaspillage, par la décadence de notre marine, le succès de la politique que Dupleix a voulu suivre, et il serait inique de faire retomber sur le contrôleur général la responsabilité de ces maux, qu'il a voulu, mais qu'il n'a pu, empêcher.'—*Machault d'Arnouville*, par M. Marion (p. 442), 1891.

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could be erected by the French in India was to secure their communications with Europe by breaking the power of the English at sea; but this stroke was beyond the strength of the French in 1754. In the last war the French navy had, according to Voltaire, been entirely destroyed; and though since the peace of 1748 it had to some extent recovered, yet we are told that in 1755 France had only sixty-seven ships of the line and thirty-one frigates to set against one hundred and thirty-one English men-of-war and eighty-one frigates. When the Seven Years' War began in 1756, the French did make a vigorous attempt to regain command of the water-ways; and it must be clear that to their failure in that direct trial of naval strength, far more than to their abandonment of the policy of Dupleix, must be attributed the eventual disappearance of their prospects of establishing a permanent ascendancy in India.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE SECOND FRENCH WAR.

SECTION I. *Lally.*

IN 1756, when a rupture with France over the North American colonies was imminent, George II, to save Hanover, made a treaty of alliance with Frederick of Prussia, against whom the Austrian Empress, Maria Theresa, had prepared an overpowering hostile coalition. Fortunately for England the French Government, then under the sinister influence of Madame de Pompadour, was persuaded into a rash and unwise conjunction with the Austrians; so that during the war France had to meet the Prussian army on land and the English navy at sea, a very formidable amphibious combination. The open rupture, in 1756, between England and France at once substituted direct and formal hostilities in India for the straggling unauthorized warfare, under the pretext of aiding friendly native princes, that the two Companies had been carrying on up to 1754. The French Government, having resolved to attack the English possessions in the East, laid out their plan of operations, prudently enough, on the principle of a regular military campaign. They

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committed the charge of a strong expeditionary force to Count Lally, instructing him to abstain from attempting to penetrate inland, to avoid participation in the quarrels of the native princes, and to concentrate his efforts upon seizing the fortified stations of the English on the coast and uprooting their commerce. They warned him, in short, against reverting to the system of Dupleix and Bussy. The Directors of the French Company had no wish to set out again on schemes of territorial aggrandisement; they desired chiefly the restoration of their finances and the secure establishment of their commercial monopoly by the total expulsion of the English from the Coromandel coast.

These views are treated somewhat impatiently by the latest French biographer of Lally[1], who writes that the French Directors were better fitted to weigh out pepper than to comprehend the problems of a people's expansion; and who lays very great stress upon Bussy's magniloquent reports of his conquests in the Dekhan and of his supreme influence at Hyderabad. Nevertheless the fact remains that the one essential point was to drive the English out of the country, that Lally was quite right in declaring no peace or security to be possible for France in India until this had been done, and that when the struggle came Bussy either could not or would not give any material assistance from Hyderabad. Clearly the first step was to beat the English by adroit and diligent fighting, whereby the problems of expansion would have been mightily

[1] M. Tibulle Hamont.

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simplified, and might have been solved afterwards at leisure. Unluckily for the French, Lally, a soldier of great bravery and self-devotion, was yet a man totally unfit for the work. D'Argenson, when the Directors asked the Crown for Lally's services, warned them in words that almost exactly foretold what subsequently ensued, that he was a hot-headed, stiff-necked martinet, who would burst out into thunderous fury at the least check or blunder, and would make himself so generally detested that his own officers would thwart him, trip him up, and foil all his operations for the satisfaction of ruining their general.

However, as the Directors insisted, Lally was sent out with a force quite sufficient, in experienced and capable hands, to have reduced, at least temporarily, all the Coromandel settlements, particularly if it had reached India twelve months before it did arrive. If the expedition, which was determined upon in 1755, had left France in 1756, soon after the declaration of war, it might have descended upon the coast at a very critical moment. For in June 1756 the English had been driven out of Calcutta by the Nawáb Suráj-ud-daulah, losing all their forts and factories in Bengal; and in October Clive had taken all the Company's best troops northward with the fleet from Madras to rescue his countrymen and recover Fort William. When these troops were despatched the Madras President and his Council fully realized the situation; they knew that war had been declared in Europe, that a strong French force was under preparation for India, that whenever it reached Pondicherry Bussy at Hyderabad would co-

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operate with Lally on the coast, and that the southern Presidency would be in great danger if this joint attack were made while the troops were absent in Bengal. They decided nevertheless, with remarkable promptitude and judgment, to run the risk of sending at once a large relieving force, in the hope that it might settle matters in Bengal and return before the French could appear on the Coromandel coast. Their venture met with the success it deserved; for the preparations in France were so dilatory and the outward voyage was so slow, that Lally did not land at Pondicherry until April 1758.

By that time the opportunity had been irremediably lost. The English had not only driven Suráj-ud-daulah out of Calcutta, they had dispersed his army at Plassey, had dethroned him and set up another Nawáb, had become masters of Bengal, the richest province of India, and had expelled the French from all that region. By that time Clive could report that 'perfect tranquillity reigns in Bengal;' so that he was able to co-operate powerfully in the gallant defence of Madras by supplies of men and money. He also made an effective diversion by despatching Colonel Forde to drive the French out of those important districts, the Northern Sirkars, which was done very smartly and successfully. As these were the districts assigned to Bussy by the Nizám for the payment of his troops, their loss was a heavy blow to his credit at Hyderabad, and disclosed the real instability of his imposing position.

Meanwhile Lally had landed his men, had taken Fort St. David, which was not very resolutely defended, and

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would have marched on Madras if want of money and supplies had not prevented him. He was entirely without tact or temper, suspected all the civil authorities of corruption, knew nothing of Oriental feelings or customs; and had precisely that impatient contempt of local experience and provincial soldiering that has so often led second-rate military commanders to disaster in colonial and Asiatic warfare. In order to get money he made a fruitless raid upon Tanjore, which only plunged him deeper into unpopularity and financial embarrassment. The English ships of war had now arrived, and several sharp though indecisive encounters with the French squadron had so damaged the French ships (which had no port for shelter or repairs) and discouraged their admiral, that in August 1758 D'Aché withdrew, like Labourdonnais before him, to the Isle of France. Neither entreaties nor protests, nor the fury of Lally, could induce him to remain or return. Then came the quarrel with Bussy, who lost patience, became estranged, and made no effort whatever to avert the discomfiture of the unlucky general. Lally, who saw and said plainly that the French could take no firm hold of the country until the English were beaten out of it, summoned Bussy to join him from Hyderabad; but with Bussy's departure vanished all the French ascendancy at the Nizám's court, where it was afterwards supplanted by English influence, and was never again restored.

Surrounded by obstacles, almost destitute of means, disliked by the civil functionaries, and distrusted by the army, Lally marched desperately upon Madras.

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But the place was strong and well victualled, while Lally was in great straits for men and money, with no hope of reinforcements; his troops were discouraged, and at Pondicherry he was much more hated than helped. A letter from a high Pondicherry official to M. Conflans, 4th September 1758, intercepted by the English, gives some notion of the depression then prevailing at headquarters; and another letter (also intercepted) from Lally in his camp at Madras to the Governor of Pondicherry betrays the unfortunate general's rage and misery. He proposed to storm the place by the open breach, but his officers refused to risk an assault; so when the English fleet at last hove in sight the siege had to be abandoned, to the great damage of the French reputation among the native princes, who were all watching the contest. Lally furiously accused Bussy of disloyalty in evading his demands for money and active co-operation; nor can it be denied that Bussy, although far superior to Lally in military skill and in the knack of managing Orientals, did much prefer remaining at Hyderabad, where he was wealthy and independent, to serving against the English under Lally, who was suspicious, intractable, and manifestly predestined to ruin.

In the course of the next twelve months Lally's situation grew rapidly worse; there was a serious mutiny among his European soldiery, and the French fleet under D'Aché had finally quitted the coast. Clive's letter to Pitt in January 1759[1], before the siege of Madras had been raised,

[1] 'Notwithstanding the extraordinary effort made by the French in sending out M. Lally with a considerable force the last year, I am

shows that he had confidently foreseen that the English power at sea, and their possession of the resources of Bengal, must inevitably bring about Lally's complete discomfiture; and within another year this prediction was fulfilled. The two armies manœuvred against each other in the Carnatic for some months; but Lally, disregarding Bussy's advice, insisted on investing the fort of Vandewash; whereupon he was attacked by Coote, who saw that to meet him Lally would be compelled to divide his force, having to leave a part in the entrenchments. The battle that followed was gallantly contested between the European troops, who were about 2000 strong on each side, by push of bayonet, musketry at close quarters, and

confident, before the end of this, they will be near their last gasp in the Carnatic, unless some very unforeseen event interpose in their favour. The superiority of our squadron, and the plenty of money and supplies of all kinds which our friends on the coast will be furnished with from this province, while the enemy are in total want of everything, without any visible means of redress—are such advantages as, if properly attended to, cannot fail of wholly effecting their ruin in that as well as in every other part of India.'

Compare the tone of this letter with the following extract from the intercepted letter (referred to above) written to M. Conflans, 4th September, 1758, by a high Pondicherry official :—'Pauvres Français, où en sommes-nous ? quels projets ne nous croyons-nous pas en état d'exécuter ? et combien sommes-nous déchus de l'espérance que nous avait donné la prise du Fort St. David! Je plains notre général, il doit avoir la tête bien embarrassée, quelque vaste que soit son génie. Sans argent, sans escadre, ses troupes mécontentes, le crédit de la nation perdu, sa réputation chancellante, la mauvaise saison approchant et nous forçant à dépenser pour subsister, sans pouvoir tenter d'enterprise qui nous procure des fonds, que pouvons-nous devenir? Je ne crains pas pour moi, mais je vois avec peine que nous ne brillons pas.'

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artillery. Coote's and Draper's regiments met the battalions of Lorraine and Lally; there was resolute charging and countercharging, until the French fell into some disorder, when the plunging fire of the English cannon, the explosion of a tumbril, the fine handling of their men by Coote and Draper, and the capture of Bussy, determined the defeat of the French. The sepoys on both sides were kept back by their commanders and took little share in the action; the Marathas in the French pay hovered uselessly on the outskirts. Lally vainly attempted, with his usual intrepidity, to lead in person a charge of the French cavalry, but they could not face the superior artillery of the English; so he rallied his broken lines behind the entrenchments, and made good his retreat to Pondicherry[1].

It was nevertheless a fatal reverse. The French could no longer keep the open field; they lost all their strong places; the districts from which they drew their supplies were gradually occupied by the enemy. The French fleet never returned in strength to the coast, for D'Aché flatly refused to bring back his squadron from the Isle of France, and the English squadron held the sea. Lally was at last blockaded by land and water in Pondicherry, which was quite unprovided with magazines or a sufficient garrison, and the French were completely surrounded and half-starved, until they were compelled to surrender at discretion in January 1761.

[1] Battle of Vandewash, January, 1760.

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SECTION II. *Results of the War.*

From the fall of Pondicherry we may date the complete and final termination of the contest between France and England in India. All that remained to the French in that part of the world, says Voltaire, was their regret at having spent during more than forty years immense sums to maintain a Company that had been equally maladroit in commerce and in war, that had never made any profits, and that had paid no genuine dividends either to shareholders or to creditors. He adds that the Abbé Morellet, who was employed to examine the accounts, proved from official figures that between 1725 and 1769 successive French ministers had advanced to the Company the astonishing sum of 169 millions of francs. The French did indeed recover, at the peace of 1763, the places that had belonged to them before Dupleix entered upon his schemes of territorial extension. Nevertheless the sinews of their war power were cut by the stipulation against their fortifying these places, and against their keeping troops in Bengal, whereby France was permanently shut out of North India and confined to some indefensible points on the sea-board. The two primary conditions of success, whether commercial or military, in India were the establishment of strong *points d'appui* on the coast, and the maintenance of a naval force that could keep open communications with Europe; but the English had gained the preponderance at sea, while the French had now lost their footing on land. The causes of their failure are to be found, not in the ill-luck or incapacity

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of individuals (for that might have been repaired), but in the wider combination of circumstances that decided against France her great contest with England at that period.

A recent French writer[1] goes so far as to declare that if Lally had thrown into the sea the instructions given him in France, if he had resumed the policy of Dupleix and followed Bussy's advice, the imperial diadem of India would not now be worn by the English Queen. It is more than doubtful whether Lally would have gained anything by imitating Dupleix, or by taking counsel with the astute Bussy; and it is certain that to drive the English out of India during the Seven Years' War was an exploit far beyond Lally's power or capacity. India was not lost by the French because Dupleix was recalled, or because Labourdonnais and D'Aché both left the coast at critical moments, or because Lally was headstrong and intractable. Still less was the loss due to any national inaptitude for distant and perilous enterprises, in which the French have always displayed high qualities. The record of their exploration and adventure in America and Asia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, fully sustains the reputation of this courageous and energetic people. It was through the short-sighted, ill-managed European policy of Louis XV, misguided by his mistresses and by incompetent ministers, that France lost her Indian settlements in the Seven Years' War. When it is remembered that before the end of that war France had lost her North American colonies,

[1] M. Tibulle Hamont, *Lally Tollendal.*

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all her African settlements, and some of her finest West Indian islands, that in Germany her campaigns had been unfortunate, and that she had suffered deplorably at sea, there need be little hesitation in acknowledging that better men than Lally must have failed on the Coromandel coast.

To sum up, the essential reasons why the French could not hold India are to be discovered in the insolvency of their East India Company, the maladministration of their affairs at home and abroad, the continual sacrifice of colonial and mercantile interests to a disastrous war-policy on the continent, and above all to the exhaustion of their naval strength, which left all transmarine possessions of France defenceless against the overwhelming superiority of England[1]. The whole unfettered energy of the free English people had been wielded by Pitt, the ablest war-minister that England has ever seen, against the careless incapacity of courtiers and the ill-supported efforts of one or two able officials, under such a king as Louis XV[2]. Nor will it be denied that French writers are mainly right in ascribing the success of England at this period, in India and else-

[1] Between 1755 and 1762 France lost ninety-four ships of war carrying 3880 guns; and on January 1, 1762 she had only forty-four line of battle ships left. *Essai sur l'histoire de l'administration de la marine.* Lambert de Sainte Croix, 1892.

[2] When the Duc de Choiseul pressed Louis XV about the state of the French navy at this time, the king replied, 'Mon cher Choiseul, vous êtes aussi fou que vos prédécesseurs; ils m'ont tous dit qu'ils voulaient une marine; il n'y aura jamais en France d'autres marines que celles du peintre Vernet.'—La Harpe.

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where, to this signal inequality between the two governments[1].

We have thus seen that, of the three collisions between the French and English upon Indian soil, in the first both parties found themselves, at the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, very much in the same condition at the end as at the beginning of hostilities, with a slight advantage, if any, to the French. On the second occasion, when Dupleix launched his grand political schemes, the French closed the unofficial war in 1754 on terms at least equal; they had probably some local superiority of influence and position. The third war, which was international, finished in 1761 decisively and irremediably against them, as was proved twenty years afterwards. When, in 1781, the French made their last descent upon an Indian coast, the long odds were for the moment against England on the sea, for she was fighting single-handed against all the maritime nations; against France, Spain, Holland, and her own American colonies. She was also entangled within India in a very intricate desultory war against Hyder Ali of Mysore and the Marathas; two powers which both held strips of the Indian sea-board, and were both corresponding with the enemy. The French fleet was under Suffren, the best admiral ever possessed by France, and the military force in the expedition was commanded by Bussy. Suffren was far superior as a naval tactician to the English commander, but the French admiral found on the Indian

[1] 'Elle avait vaincu par la seule supériorité de son gouvernement.' —H. Martin, *Histoire de France.*

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coast 'no friendly port or roadstead, no base of supplies or repair.' The French settlements had all fallen by 1779; and the invaluable harbour of Trincomalee, in Ceylon, had been taken from the Dutch just a month before[1]. And in any event the English power was by that time too firmly consolidated in India by our acquisition of Bengal, with the rich districts north-westward up to Allahabad, to be shaken by the landing on the south-east coast of a small force, which could hardly have produced more than local damage and temporary political confusion in the peninsula. Suffren's real object must have been no more than to create a diversion by harassing our Eastern possessions while our forces were employed against the colonial revolt in America; and in 1783 his operations were interrupted by news of the Peace of Versailles.

We are therefore entitled to fix on the Peace of Paris in 1763 as the true date after which the maritime powers of Europe finally withdrew from all serious rivalry, either in commerce or conquest, with England in India. The epoch is one of pre-eminent importance in the history of the rise of our dominion; for thenceforward the contest for ascendancy is between the English and the native Powers only—a contest of which the issue was in reality so far from being doubtful, amazing, or invisible that it could be and was already foreseen and foretold.

[1] Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power in History*, p. 428.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE CONQUEST OF BENGAL.

SECTION I. *Clive's Campaign* (1757).

IN the foregoing chapter the summary of affairs on the east coast has been carried forward up to the date of Suffren's expedition, in order to present an unbroken view of our relations with the French in India. It is now necessary to go back some years in order to take up the narrative of events in Bengal.

The rise and territorial expansion of the English power may be conveniently divided into two periods, which slightly overlap each other, but on the whole mark two distinct and consecutive stages in the construction of our dominion. The first is the period when the contest lay among the European nations, who began by competing for commercial advantages, and ended by fighting for political superiority on the Indian littoral. The commercial competition was going on throughout the whole of the seventeenth century; but the struggle with the French, which laid the foundation of our dominion, lasted less than twenty years, for it began in 1745 and was virtually decided in 1763. The second period, upon

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which we are now about to enter, is that during which England was contending with the native Indian Powers, not for commercial preponderance or for strips of territory and spheres of influence along the sea-board, but for supremacy over all India. Reckoning the beginning of this contest from 1756, when Clive and Admiral Watson sailed from Madras to recover Calcutta from the Nawáb of Bengal, it may be taken to have been substantially determined in fifty years; although for another fifty years the expansion of our territory went on by great strides, with long halts intervening, until the natural limits of India were attained by the conquest of Sinde and the Punjab.

The first thing that must strike the ordinary observer, on looking back over the hundred years from 1757 to 1857, during which the acquisition of our Indian dominion has been accomplished, is the magnitude of the exploit; the next is the remarkable ease with which it was achieved. At the present moment, when the English survey from their small island in the West the immense Eastern empire that has grown up out of their petty trading settlements on the Indian sea-board, they are apt to be struck with wonder and a kind of dismay at the prospering of their own handiwork. The thing is, as has been said, so unprecedented in history, and particularly it is so entirely unfamiliar to modern political ideas—we have become so unaccustomed in the Western world to build up empires in the high Roman fashion—that even those who have studied the beginnings of our Indian dominion are inclined to treat the outcome and climax as something passing man's understanding. Our magnificent

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possessions are commonly regarded as a man might look at a great prize he had drawn by luck in a lottery; they are supposed to have been won by incalculable chance [1].

But it may be fairly argued that this view, which embodies the general impression on this subject, can be controverted by known facts. The idea that India might be easily conquered and governed, with a very small force, by a race superior in warlike capacity or in civilisation, was no novelty at all. In the first place the thing had actually been done once already. The Emperor Bábar, who invaded India from Central Asia in the sixteenth century, has left us his authentic memoirs; it is a book of great historical interest, and nothing more amusing has ever been written by an Asiatic. He says: 'When I invaded the country for the fifth time, overthrew Sultan Ibrahim, and subdued the empire of Hindusthan, my servants, the merchants and their servants [2] and the followers of all friends that were in camp along with me, were numbered, and they amounted to 12,000 men. I placed my foot,' he writes, 'in the stirrup of resolution,

[1] The author of the *Expansion of England*, for instance, in that very instructive dissertation on our Indian empire which occupies two chapters of his book, lends himself to this popular belief. 'Our acquisition of India,' he says, 'was made blindly. Nothing great that has ever been done by Englishmen was done so unintentionally or accidentally as the conquest of India.' And again: 'The conquest of India is very wonderful in the sense that nothing similar to it had ever happened before, and that therefore nothing similar could be expected by those who for the first century and a half administered the affairs of the Company of India.'

[2] He means the Commissariat.

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and my hands on the reins of confidence in God—and I marched against the possessions of the throne of Delhi and the dominions of Hindusthan, whose army was said to amount to 100,000 foot, with more than 1000 elephants. 'The Most High God,' he adds, 'did not suffer the hardships that I had undergone to be thrown away, but defeated my formidable enemy and made me conqueror of this noble country.'

This was done in 1526; Báber's victory at Paniput gave him the mastery of all Northern India and founded the Moghul empire. He had really accomplished the enterprise with smaller means and resources than those possessed by the English when they had fixed themselves securely in Bengal with a base on the sea; and the great host which he routed at Paniput was a far more formidable army than the English ever encountered in India until they met the Sikhs. Now, what had been done before could be done again, and was indeed likely to be done again. So when at the opening of the eighteenth century the Moghul empire was evidently declining towards a fall, and people were speculating upon what might come after it, we find floating in the minds of cool observers the idea that the next conquest of India might possibly be made by Europeans.

The key-note had indeed been struck earlier by Bernier, a French physician at the court of Aurangzeb towards the close of the seventeenth century, who writes in his book that M. de Condé or M. de Turenne with 20,000 men could conquer all India; and who in his letter to Colbert lays particular stress first on the riches,

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secondly on the weakness, of Bengal. But in 1746 one Colonel James Mill, who had been twenty years in India, submitted to the Austrian Emperor a scheme for conquering Bengal as a very feasible and profitable undertaking. 'The whole country of Hindusthan,' he says, 'or empire of the Great Moghul, is, and ever has been, in a state so feeble and defenceless that it is almost a miracle that no prince of Europe, with a maritime power at command, has not as yet thought of making such acquisitions there as at one stroke would put him and his subjects in possession of infinite wealth. . . . The policy of the Moghul is bad, his military worse, and as to a maritime power to command and protect his coasts, he has none at all. . . . The province of Bengal is at present under the dominion of a rebel subject of the Moghul, whose annual revenue amounts to about two millions. But Bengal, though not to be reduced by the power of the Moghul, is equally indefensible with the rest of Hindusthan on the side of the ocean, and consequently may be forced out of the rebel's hand with all its wealth, which is incredibly vast.' If we bear in mind how little could have been accurately known of India as a whole by an Englishman in 1746, we must give Colonel Mill credit for much sagacity and insight into the essential facts of the situation. He discerns the central points; he places his finger upon the elementary causes of India's permanent weakness, her political instability within, and her sea-coast exposed and undefended externally.

In the year 1716, the English, whose trading factories had long been settled in Bengal, obtained from the

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Moghul emperor an important Firmán, or imperial order, permitting them to import and export goods upon payment of a fixed tribute, and protecting them from the heavy and arbitrary taxes laid on them at the caprice of the Nawábs. Bengal was a province under a governor whose ordinary title was the Nawáb Názim, who held office during the pleasure of the emperor, and who was frequently changed, so long as the empire was in its vigour, lest he should become too strong for the central authority. But as the power of the emperor declined the independence of the Nawábs increased in this distant province, until in the eighteenth century, when Maratha insurrections and the irruptions from Central Asia multiplied the distractions of the State, the Bengal governors paid little obedience and less revenue to Delhi. Under Murshid Kuli Khan, a man of considerable ability, the governorship became in the usual fashion hereditary; but in 1742 his grandson was overthrown and slain by Aliverdi Khan, an Afghan adventurer who raised himself from a very humble post to be deputy-governor of Behár, and who won for himself by the sword the rulership of Bengal. During the fourteen years of his strong administration the foreign merchants had no great reason to complain; for although he levied large subsidies from the English, French, and Dutch factories, he gave them protection and enforced good order, suppressing all quarrels and tolerating no encroachments. On his death, in 1756, he was succeeded by his adopted son, known in English histories as Suráj-ud-daulah [1], a young man whose savage

[1] The accurate spelling is Chirágh ud daulah.

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and suspicious temper was controlled by no experience or natural capacity for rulership, and who had long been jealous of the English, whom he suspected of having corresponded with a possible rival against him for the succession.

The new Nawáb had just been proclaimed, when letters reached Calcutta from England informing the President that as war with France was expected he should put his settlement in a state of defence; whereupon he began to strengthen the fortifications. But the right to fortify their places had not been conceded to the English in Bengal; and the Nawáb, to whom some offence had previously been given by the abrupt dismissal of a messenger, sternly ordered them at once to desist. The English President, Drake, not understanding his danger, answered by explaining that the fortifications were against the French, who had disregarded the neutrality of the Moghul's dominions in the last war by taking Madras, and who might this time attack Calcutta. This reply Suráj-ud-daulah took to mean that his protection and sovereign authority were very lightly regarded by the foreigners. In great indignation he seized the factory at Kásimbazár, near his capital, and marched with a large army upon Calcutta. The English defended themselves for a time; but the town was open, the governor and many of the English fled in ships down the river; and the rest surrendered on promise of honourable treatment. Yet those whom the Nawáb captured with the fort were thrown into a kind of prison-room called the Black Hole, from which, after one night's dreadful suffering,

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only twenty-three out of one hundred and forty-six emerged alive.

As soon as the news of this dismal catastrophe reached Madras, the President lost no time in despatching the fleet, commanded by Admiral Watson, to Bengal, with troops under Colonel Clive. The force was calculated to be sufficient not only for retaking Calcutta, but also for reducing Hooghly, expelling the French from Chandernagore, and even for attempting the Nawáb's capital at Múrshidábád; and Clive set out, as he wrote, 'with the full intention of settling the Company's estate in those parts in a better and more lasting condition than ever.' He had less reason, he added, to apprehend a check from the Nawáb's army than from the country and the climate. Nor indeed does it appear that any serious misgivings as to the result of the expedition troubled the government at Madras, where they were only anxious to get the business done in Bengal before the French armament under Lally should arrive on the Coromandel coast. Clive lost no time in driving the enemy's garrison out of Calcutta; and when the Nawáb himself marched down to encounter him an indecisive engagement took place, followed by a truce which was very soon broken. Watson and Clive carried by assault the entrenched station of the French at Chandernagore; but the Nawáb, who at first acquiesced, at the last moment withdrew his consent to the attack, and he was secretly inviting Bussy to march from Hyderabad to his relief. There could be no reasonable doubt that Suráj-ud-daulah would renew hostilities on the first opportunity, while on the other hand Lally's expedition

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must soon reach the eastern coast, and the Madras government was urgently pressing for the return of the troops.

The English in Bengal thus found themselves in a perilous dilemma, since the troops could not return to Madras until Calcutta had been in some way placed beyond danger from the Nawáb. When, therefore, overtures were received from certain disaffected chiefs of the Nawáb's court, Clive entered into a compact to dethrone Suráj-ud-daulah, and to set up in his stead Meer Jáfir, one of the principal conspirators. He then marched up the country against the Nawáb, whom he found entrenched at Plassey with about 15,000 cavalry, 30,000 foot, and 40 pieces of cannon. The engagement began with some cannonading, in which a battery managed by Frenchmen gave much annoyance to the English. But as soon as the French had been dislodged and some rising ground occupied that commanded the interior of the enemy's fortified camp, Clive delivered his assault at one angle; whereupon the Nawáb fled, and his whole army dispersed in a general rout, leaving on the field its camp equipage, its artillery, and about 500 men. Clive's despatch reports the loss on his side to have been twenty-two killed and fifty wounded. Next morning Meer Jáfir, who had merely hovered about the flanks of the engagement with a large body of cavalry, paid a visit to Clive, was saluted as Nawáb, and hastened to occupy the capital, Múrshidábád, where he soon after put to death Suráj-uddaulah. The whole province quietly submitted to the new ruler; the emperor's government at Delhi, which

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was just then occupied by Ahmed Shah with an Afghan army, was totally incapable of interference; so that by this sudden and violent revolution the English ascendancy became at once established in Bengal.

Section II. *The Native Armies of the Period.*

The rout of Plassey—for it can hardly be called a battle—is in itself chiefly remarkable as the first important occasion upon which the East India Company's troops[1] were openly arrayed, not as auxiliaries, but as principals, against a considerable native army commanded in person by the ruler of a great province. It stands, in fact, first on the long list of regular actions that have been fought between the English in India and the chiefs or military leaders of the country. The event supplies, therefore, a very striking illustration of the radical weakness of those native governments and armies to whom the English found themselves opposed in the middle of the eighteenth century. This inherent feebleness of our adversaries, the inability to govern or defend their possessions, obviously explains why the English, who could do both, so rapidly made room for themselves in a country which, though rich and populous, was in a practical sense masterless. It must also be remembered that Bengal and the other provinces bordering on the sea in which the English won these facile triumphs, were far more defenceless than the inland country, partly through the dilapidation of the central power, partly because the

[1] None of the regular British army were present.

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people of those tracts are naturally less warlike than elsewhere, and partly by the accident that they were just then very ill governed. The army of the later Moghul emperors had always been bad; yet until Aurangzeb died it was quite strong enough to repulse any small expeditionary force descending upon the coast. Nor could such a stroke as Clive's at Plassey have been attempted with impunity if Bengal had happened to possess a vigorous and capable viceroy; for a few years later our first campaigns against Hyder Ali in the south and the Marathas in the west showed us that under competent leadership the superior numbers of an Indian army might make it a very dangerous antagonist.

We have to understand, then, that our earliest victories were over troops that were little better than a rabble of hired soldiers, without coherence or loyalty. An Indian army of that period was usually an agglomeration of mercenaries collected by the captains of companies who supplied men to any one able to pay for them, having enlisted them at random out of the swarm of roving freelances and swordsmen, chiefly Asiatic foreigners, by whom all India was infested. These bands had no better stomach for serious fighting than the *condottieri* of Italy in the sixteenth century; the close fire of European musketry was more than they had bargained for; and artillery, properly served, they could not face at all. Moreover their leaders changed sides without scruple, and were constantly plotting either to betray or supplant their employers. It is not surprising, therefore, if troops of this kind were such exceedingly perilous

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weapons in timid or maladroit hands that the prince, governor, or usurper who had retained their services often went into action with a very uncomfortable distrust of his best regiments. In the eighteenth century most of the revolted provinces of the empire had been appropriated by successful captains of these mercenaries, among whom the best fighting men were the Afghans. Their most celebrated leader was Ahmed Shah the Abdallee, a mighty warrior of the Afghan nation, and the only great Asiatic soldier who appeared in India during the eighteenth century.

But no sooner had the European appeared upon the Indian arena, than the men of this new immigration were discovered to be distinctly superior to all Asiatic foreigners in the art of war, and far beyond them in those qualities of united, persistent and scientific action by which a compact and civilized force must always prevail in the long run over incoherent and uninstructed opponents. Against the French or the English the dissolute and rickety Nawábs of Bengal and the Carnatic could only take into the field a crowd of mutinous soldiery, who often dispersed at the first shock and followed their leader in tumultuous flight. The natural and speedy result was that the military classes of the Indian population very soon began to transfer their services to the standard of leaders who always paid and usually won; who were invariably to be seen in the front line of battle, and who did the hardest fighting with a *corps d'élite* of their own countrymen. Our own Sepoy army was recruited and gradually developed out of the immense floating mass of professional mercenaries (reckoned by

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good contemporary authority at two millions) who roved about India in those days. It is on record that any number of foot-soldiers might be enlisted, although they 'deserted in shoals' when a very distant march was in prospect; and that the best cavalry of Hindusthan (Afghans, Tartars, Persians, or Marathas) might be had in abundance at six weeks' notice, 'many of them out of the very camp of the enemy[1].' The English commanders, however, seem to have chiefly relied, for their infantry, upon natives of India, who were probably more faithful to their salt, and more amenable to discipline, than the wilder folk of Central Asia. And for a hundred years the Indian sepoy well repaid the confidence placed in his courage and loyalty. With artillery served by men who stood fast to their guns, with a few red-coated English battalions, with a strong contingent of well-drilled native infantry and some excellent light cavalry, the Company's army presented a combination of war material that only wanted good handling to dispose of any opponent in southern India.

The foregoing observations on the native armies of this period may help to explain the rapidity with which the English won their earliest battles against Indian adversaries, and made their first conquests in the sea-board provinces, especially in Bengal. They had only to upset a few unstable rulers of foreign descent, whose title rested on dexterous usurpation; and to disperse by their trained battalions, European and native, great bodies of hired troops who had usually no interest in the war beyond their pay. Between the Marathas who

[1] *East India Records.*

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were spreading over the country from the west and the Afghans who had broken in from the north, the inland country was being ruined by rapine and exactions; trade and cultivation had fallen low; and the position of the minor native powers was so unsteady through military weakness and financial embarrassments that any of them might be destroyed by the loss of one campaign or even a single battle. But this course of easy victories on the outskirts of India did not last long; for we shall see that as the English penetrated further into the interior their progress became very much slower, was indeed for a time arrested. On the west coast they were already confronted by rivals very different from an incapable Bengalee Nawáb—by the Marathas, whose power had considerable national character, some political stability, and formidable military organization. Under their great Peshwa, Bálaji Bála Rao, they were now attaining the zenith of their predominance; they had conquered great territories; they were pushing forward into north India; they were supreme in the central regions; and while one army was dismembering the Nizám's State, another was extorting heavy subsidies in the Carnatic and Mysore. Their operations had hitherto been very serviceable to the English, with whom they were at this time often in alliance, by weakening all the Mahomedan rulerships, and particularly by checking Bussy's military domination at Hyderabad.

On the whole there is good ground for the opinion that if at the time of the dissolution of the Moghul empire India had been left to herself, if the Europeans had not just then appeared in the field, the whole of

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southern and central India would have fallen under Maratha dominion[1]. It was very fortunate for the English that they did not come into collision with such antagonists until their own strength had matured; since there can be no doubt that throughout the later stages of the tournament for the prize of ascendancy between England and the native Powers, our most dangerous challengers were the Marathas.

[1] 'We look on the Morattoes to be more than a match for the whole (Moghul) empire, were no European force to interfere.'—*Letter from the President and Council of Madras*, October, 1756.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE SITUATION IN BENGAL.

SECTION I. *Physical characteristics of the Province.*

CLIVE'S victory in 1757 was followed by the occupation of Bengal, which had an immense and far-reaching effect upon the position of the English in India. Our resources were so considerably increased that the defeat of the French in the Peninsula became thenceforward certain; for while Lally was cut off by sea and vainly attempting to support himself along a strip of sea-coast, the English had their feet firmly planted in the Gangetic delta and the rich alluvial districts of the lower Ganges.

The transfer of the headquarters of the Company's government to Calcutta marks a notable step forward, since it was from Bengal, not from Madras or Bombay, that the English power first struck inland into the heart of the country, and discovered the right road to supremacy in India. To advance into Bengal was to penetrate India by its soft and unprotected side. From Cape Comorin northward along the east coast there is not a single harbour for large ships; nor are the river estuaries accessible to them. But at the head of the

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Bay of Bengal we come upon a deltaic low-lying region pierced by the navigable channels which discharge through several mouths the waters of great rivers issuing from the interior. Some of these are merely huge drains of the water-logged soil; others are fed by the Himalayan snows. On this section, and upon no other of the Indian sea-board, the rivers are wide water-ways offering fair harbourage and the means of penetrating many miles inland; while around and beyond stretches the rich alluvial plain of Bengal, inhabited by a very industrious and unwarlike people, who produce much and can live on very little.

All authorities agree that in the eighteenth century the richest province of all India, in agriculture and manufactures, was Bengal. Colonel James Mill, in his already quoted memoir, points out that it has vast wealth and is indefensible towards the sea. 'The immense commerce of Bengal,' says Verelst in 1767, 'might be considered as the central point to which all the riches of India were attracted. Its manufactures find their way to the remotest parts of Hindostan.' It lay out of the regular track of invasion from Central Asia, and remote from the arena of civil wars which surged round the capital cities of the empire, Agra, Delhi, or Lahore. For ages it had been ruled by foreigners from the north; yet it was the province most exposed to maritime attack, and the most valuable in every respect to a seafaring and commercial race like the English. Its rivers lead like main arteries up to the heart of India. From Bengal north-westward the land lies open, and, with a few interruptions, almost flat, expanding into the great central plain country that we now

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call the North-West Provinces and Oudh, and further northward into the Punjab up to the foot of the Himalayan wall. Whoever holds that immense interior champaign country, which spreads from the Himalayas southeastward to the Bay of Bengal, occupies the central position that dominates all the rest of India; and it may accordingly be observed that all the great capital cities founded by successive conquering dynasties have been within this region.

Looking now at the map of India, we perceive that Upper or Continental (as distinguished from Peninsular) India has been divided off from the rest of Asia by walls of singular strength and height. The whole of the Indian land frontier is fenced and fortified by mountain ranges; and where, in the south-west towards the sea, the mountains subside and have an easier slope, the Indian desert is interposed between the outer frontier and the fertile midland region. It is as if Nature, knowing the richness of the land, had taken the greatest possible pains to protect it; for along the whole of that vast line of mountain wall which overhangs the north-west and the northern boundaries of India there are only a very few practicable passes. These are the outlets through Afghanistan, by which Alexander the Great and all subsequent invaders have descended upon the low country; and any one who, after traversing the interminable hills and stony valleys of Afghanistan, has seen, on mounting the last ridge, the vast plain of India spreading out before him in dusky haze like a sea, may imagine the feelings with which it was surveyed by these adventurous leaders from the Asiatic highlands.

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Along the whole northern line of frontier the Himalayas are practically impassable; for the chain of towering mountains is backed by a lofty table-land, rising at its highest elevation to nearly 17,000 feet, which projects northward into Central Asia like the immense glacis of a fortress.

Such are the natural fortifications of India landward. But an invader landing on the sea-board takes all these defences in reverse. He enters, as has been said, by open ill-guarded water-gates; he can penetrate into the centre of the fortress, can march up inside to the foot of the walls, can occupy the posts, and turn the fortifications against others. This is just what the English have accomplished between 1757 and 1849, during the century occupied by their wars with the native Powers in India. At the beginning of that period the conquest of Bengal transferred from southern India to that province the true centre of government; and thus we emerge rapidly into a far wider arena of war and politics.

Section II. *Internal Affairs and Administrative confusion.*

For the English, after their victory at Plassey, the most urgent and important matter was the restoration of some regular administration. They had invested Meer Jáfir with the Nawábship under a treaty which bound him to make to them heavy money payments in compensation for their losses by the seizure of Calcutta and other factories, and for their war expenditure; agreeing in return to supply troops at the Nawáb's cost whenever he should require them. The result was to drain the native ruler's treasury and at the same time to reduce him, for

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the means of enforcing his authority and maintaining his throne, to a condition of dependence upon the irresponsible foreigners who commanded an army stationed within his province. Such a situation was by no means novel in India, where the leaders of well-disciplined troops are often as dangerous to their own government as to its enemies. At this very time, indeed, Bussy with his French contingent at Hyderabad was in much the same position as Clive with his English levies in Bengal. But when Lally had recalled Bussy from Hyderabad the French power disappeared from the Dekhan, and was soon after extinguished in their general discomfiture; while the English were consolidating their position in a kingdom that they had practically conquered.

The difficulty of this consolidation was greatly enhanced by the perplexity and indecision of the English as to their actual situation in the country. Although they were conquerors *de facto*, they neither could nor would assume the attitude of rulers *de jure*; they were merely the representatives of a commercial company with no warrant from their nation to annex territory, and obliged to pretend deference toward a native ruler who was really subservient to themselves. Nothing more surely leads to misrule than the degradation of a civil government to subserve the will of some arbitrary force or faction within the State; and in Bengal the evils of precarious and divided authority were greatly heightened by special aggravations. In the first place the Company and the Nawáb were equally hard pressed for money. The Company were making large and emergent remittances to Madras for sustaining the war against the French; and the Nawáb,

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who did not choose to place himself entirely at the mercy of his foreign allies by disbanding his own army, was beset by mutinous bands claiming arrears that he could not pay. Meanwhile he wanted troops to put down disorder within his territories and to repulse attacks from without; for some of the principal landholders were in revolt against him; the Marathas were threatening Bengal on the west; and the heir apparent of the Delhi emperor had appeared with a force in the north-western districts, on the pretext of reclaiming a province of his father's empire. Secondly, the Company were not merely the Nawáb's too powerful auxiliaries, demanding a large share of his revenue as the price of their annual support; nor were they, like the Marathas or the Afghans, an army of occupation that might be bought out by disbursement of one huge indemnity. They represented an association which insisted upon regular remittances to Europe; their primary interests and objects were still commercial; and as soon as they found themselves irresistible they began to monopolize the whole trade in some of the most valuable products of the country. By investing themselves with political attributes without discarding their commercial character, they produced an almost unprecedented conjunction which engendered intolerable abuses and confusion in Bengal.

This is the only period of Anglo-Indian history which throws grave and unpardonable discredit on the English name. During the six years from 1760 to 1765, Clive's absence from the country left the Company's affairs in the hands of incapable and inexperienced chiefs, just at the moment when vigorous and statesmanlike management

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was urgently needed. That Clive himself foresaw clearly that the system would not answer and would not last, is shown by his letter (1759) to Pitt, in which he suggested to the Prime Minister the acquisition of Bengal in full sovereignty by the English nation, promising him a net revenue of two millions sterling. In the meantime he had done what he could to revive internal order, and had forced the Delhi prince to evacuate the province. But after his departure for England in 1760 the invasions from outside were renewed; and within Bengal the whole administration was paralysed by acrimonious disputes between the Company's agents and the Nawáb, who fought against his effacement, and was secretly corresponding with the Dutch. Being intent, as was natural, on asserting his own independent authority, he manœuvred to thwart and embarrass the Company, intrigued with their rivals, and did his best to disconcert their joint operations against the Marathas who were laying his country waste, since a defeat might at least help to shake off the English.

It followed that as neither party could govern tolerably, both soon became equally unpopular, and that during these years the country was in fact without an authoritative ruler. For while the English traders garrisoned the country with a large body of well-paid and well-disciplined troops, the whole duty of filling the military chest and carrying on an executive government fell upon the Nawáb, who was distracted between dread of assassination by his own officers and fear of dethronement by the Company. As the English traders had come to Bengal avowedly with the sole purpose of making money, many of them set sail again

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for Europe as soon as they had made enough. In the mean time, finding themselves entirely without restraint or responsibility, uncontrolled either by public opinion or legal liabilities (for there was no law in the land), they naturally behaved as in such circumstances, with such temptations, men would behave in any age or country. Some of them lost all sense of honour, justice, and integrity; they plundered as Moghuls or Marathas had done before them, though in a more systematic and business-like fashion; the eager pursuit of wealth and its easy acquisition had blunted their consciences and produced general insubordination. As Clive wrote later to the Company, describing the state of affairs that he found on his return in 1765, 'In a country where money is plenty, where fear is the principle of government, and where your arms are ever victorious, it was no wonder that the lust of riches should readily embrace the proffered means of gratification,' or that corruption and extortion should prevail among men who were the uncontrolled depositaries of irresistible force. This universal demoralization necessarily affected the revenues, and exasperated the disputes between the Company and Meer Jáfir by increasing the financial embarrassments of both parties. For the Nawáb showed very little zeal in providing money for the troops upon whom rested the whole power of the Company, and arrears were accumulating dangerously.

At last the President and Council determined to put an end to these discussions by removing the Nawáb. An understanding was arranged with Meer Kásim, the Diwán or chief finance minister, whereby he undertook to provide the necessary funds as a condition of his elevation to the

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rulership in the place of Meer Jáfir, who was dispossessed by a bloodless revolution. But as the new Nawáb had gained his elevation by outbidding his predecessor, this rackrenting revolution only made matters infinitely worse; for Meer Kásim's performances fell far short of his promises; the quarrels grew fiercer, and nothing was done to remedy the disorganization that was wrecking the administration and emptying the treasuries. The land revenue continued to decrease; commercial intercourse with upper India was checked by the insecurity of traffic; while the English Company were using their political ascendancy not only to insist upon their privileged monopoly of the export trade to Europe, but also to enforce an utterly unjust and extravagant claim for special exemption from all duties upon the internal commerce of Bengal. In the assertion of this pretension the Company's servants, native as well as English, set at nought the Nawáb's authority, and their factories were in arms against his revenue officers.

All this violent friction soon culminated in an explosion, brought about by an awkward attempt on the part of Mr. Ellis, chief of the Patna factory, to seize Patna city, with the object of forestalling an attack by the Nawáb on his factory. Although Ellis took the place he could not hold it, and his whole party were captured in their retreat; but the Company's troops marched against and defeated the Nawáb, who in his furious desperation caused his English prisoners to be massacred, and then fled across the frontier to the camp of the Vizier of Oudh. The Company, somewhat sobered by these tragic consequences of misrule, relinquished the more scandalous monoplies and restored

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Meer Jáfir in 1763. When he died in 1765 the ruinous system of puppet Nawábs came practically to an end; for in that year Lord Clive, who had returned to India, assumed, under a grant from the Delhi emperor, direct administration of the revenue of the three provinces of Bengal, Behár, and Orissa, with the title of the Diwáni. The Diwán had been originally the Controller-General on behalf of the imperial treasury in each province, with supreme authority over all public expenditure; so that the investiture of the Company with this office added the power of the purse to the power of the sword, and rendered them directly and regularly responsible for the most important departments of government.

Section III. *External Politics.*

We must now turn from internal affairs to the foreign relations of the East India Company and the general aspect of Indian politics. The Vizier of Oudh, when Meer Kásim took refuge with him, had in his camp the titular emperor of Delhi; and he thought the opportunity favourable for an expedition into the Bengal provinces with the professed object of restoring the imperial authority, but really with the intention of annexing such territory as he could seize. At Buxar, on the Ganges, he was met and signally defeated by the Company's troops under Major Hector Munro, in an engagement of which the eventual and secondary consequences were very important[1]. The success of the English brought the emperor into their camp, intimidated the Vizier, carried the armed forces of the Company across the Ganges to Benares and Allahabad,

[1] Battle of Buxar, September, 1764.

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and acquired for them a new, advanced, and commanding position in relation to the principalities north-west of Bengal, with whom they now found themselves for the first time in contact. By this war the English were drawn into connexion with upper India, and were brought out upon a scene of fresh operations that grew rapidly wider.

At this point, therefore, it will be useful to sketch in loose outline the condition, in the middle of the last century, of that vast tract of open plain country, watered by the Jumna, the Ganges, and their affluents, which stretches from Bengal north-westward to the Himalayas, and which is now divided into the three British provinces of Oudh, the North-West Provinces, and the Punjab. Throughout this vast region the flood of anarchy that had been rising since Aurangzeb's death was now at its height; and as the struggle over the ruins of the fallen empire was sharpest at the capital and the centres of power, the districts round Delhi and Agra, Lucknow and Benares, were perhaps more persistently fought over than any other parts of India. Two centuries of despotic government had long ago levelled and pulverised the independent chiefships or tribal federations in these flat and fertile plains, traversed by the highways open to every successive invader. So when the empire toppled over under the storms of the eighteenth century, there were no local breakwaters to check the inrush of confusion. The Marathas swarmed up, like locusts, from the south, and the Afghans came pouring down from the north through the mountain passes. Within fifty years after the death of Aurangzeb, who was at least feared throughout the

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length and breadth of India, the Moghul emperor had become the shadow of a great name, a mere instrument and figure-head in the hand of treacherous ministers or ambitious usurpers. All the imperial deputies and vice-gerents were carving out for themselves independencies, and striving to enlarge their borders at each other's expense.

We have seen that the Nizám, originally Viceroy of the Southern Provinces, had long ago made himself *de facto* sovereign of a great domain. In the north-west the Vizier of the empire was strengthening himself east of the Ganges, and had already founded the kingdom of Oudh, which underwent many changes of frontier, but lasted a century. Rohilcund had been appropriated by some daring adventurers known as Rohillas (or mountain men) from the Afghan hills; a sagacious and fortunate leader of the Hindu Játs was creating the State of Bhurtpore across the Jumna river; Agra was held by one high officer of the ruined empire; Delhi, with the emperor's person, had been seized by another; the governors sent from the capital to the Punjab had to fight for possession with the deputies of the Afghan ruler from Kábul, and against the fanatic insurrection of the Sikhs. These were, speaking roughly, the prominent and stronger competitors in the great scramble for power and lands; but scarcely one of them represented any solid organization, political principle, or title. They depended each on his own personality; and they were raised more by the magnitude of their stakes than by the style of their play above the common crowd of plunderers and partizan leaders. Any one who had money or credit might buy at the imperial treasury a Firmán authorizing

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him to collect the revenue of some refractory district. If he overcame the resistance of the landholders, the district usually became his domain, and as his strength increased he might expand into a territorial magnate; if the peasants rallied under some able headman and drove him off, their own leader often became a mighty man of his tribe, and founded a petty chiefship or a ruling family. The traces of this chance medley and fluctuating struggle for the possession of the soil or of the rents were visible long afterwards in the complicated varieties of tenure, title, and proprietary usage that made the recording of landed rights and interests so perplexing a business for English officials in this part of India.

The English reader may now form some notion of the distracted condition of upper India when the Marathas invaded it in 1758, with a numerous army intended to carry out definite plans of conquest. The Moghul empire was like a wreck among the breakers; the emperor Álamgir, who had long been a State prisoner, had been murdered; and the strife over the spoils had assumed the character of a widespreading free fight, open to all comers. But as any such contest, if it lasts, will usually merge into a battle between distinct factions under recognised leaders, so the rapidly increasing power of the Marathas, who came swarming up from the south-west, and the repeated invasions from the north-west of Ahmed Shah the Abdallee with his Afghan bands, drew together to one or the other of these two camps all the self-made princes and marauding adventurers who were parcelling out the country among themselves. When in 1757 Ahmed Shah brought an Afghan army to Delhi, he caused the

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office of Prime Minister to be conferred by the emperor on Nujíb-ud-daulah, one of the few able and politic nobles still attached to the Moghul government, who took a very leading part in subsequent events. At Lahore he appointed a viceroy to govern in his name the very important districts of the Punjab, and to keep open his communications.

Having made these arrangements for maintaining his grasp on north India, the Afghan king had returned through the mountain passes to his own country. The Marathas took advantage of his absence with characteristic audacity. They were now overflowing all India upon a flood-tide of conquest and pillage; and the supreme control of their confederacy was in the hands of Bálaji Báji Rao, the ablest of those hereditary Peshwas or prime ministers who long kept their royal family in a State prison. While this powerful and politic ruler was extending Maratha dominion in the centre of India, his brother Rughonáth Rao led northward a large army, supported by the federal contingents of Holkar and Sindia. Rughonath Rao seized Delhi, expelled Nujíb-ud-daulah; then marched swiftly with his light troops onward to Lahore, drove out the governor left there by Ahmed Shah, and substituted a Maratha administration in the Punjab.

This achievement marks, as Grant Duff observes[1], the apogee of Maratha pre-eminence; 'the Dekhan horses had quenched their thirst in the waters of the Indus;' but it also marks the turning-point and ebb of their fortunes. By such a bold stroke for the possession of North India they over-reached themselves, for the effort

[1] *History of the Marathas.*

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drew them very far from their base; the Mahomedans were numerous and hardy in the north, and the Marathas had now provoked in Ahmed Shah a much more formidable antagonist than any of those whom they had heretofore encountered. Their occupation of Delhi threatened all the Mahomedan princes of upper India, who saw that their only chance of preservation lay in a defensive alliance under some strong and warlike leader. No exertions were spared by Nujíb-ud-daulah to organize such a league under Ahmed Shah; nor did the Afghan chief hesitate to answer the summons of the Indian Musalmáns, or to resent the provocation he had received. In the winter of 1759–60 he came sweeping down through the north-west passes into the Punjab, followed by all the fighting men of Afghanistan; he retook Lahore at a blow; drove all the Maratha officers out of the northern country; attacked Holkar and Sindia, who were plundering the districts further south; defeated one after the other with heavy loss; and continued his march south-eastward until he encamped on the Jumna. The Peshwa despatched from Poona a very large force to repair these losses and recover lost ground; it was joined by all the other Maratha commanders, while on the other side the Mahomedan leaguers united with the Abdallee.

When the next campaigning season began the two armies, after some negotiations and much manœuvring, finally met in January 1761 at Paniput, not far from Delhi. This was the greatest pitched battle that had been fought for several centuries between Hindus and Mahomedans. Twenty-eight thousand Afghan horsemen

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rode with the Abdallee, whose army was brought up to a total of 80,000 horse and foot by the contingents of the Indian Mahomedans. The regular troops of the Marathas were 55,000 horse and 15,000 infantry; 15,000 Pindáris, or roving freebooters, followed their standard; a countless swarm of armed banditti thronged their camp; and the artillery on both sides included strong rocket batteries. The Marathas, who issued at dawn out of their entrenched camp, at first carried all before their furious onset; they broke through the lines of Persian musketeers, camel gunners, and light cavalry. Ahmed Shah's vizier, in an agony of rage and despair, strove vainly to stem the torrent. But the Afghan commander, unlike the half-hearted Nawábs whom the English were defeating further south, dismounted, dressed in full armour, and coolly rallied his men on foot. Collecting every available horseman he ordered a desperate charge 'sword in hand, in close order, at full gallop;' and they went storming down right upon the Maratha centre under a shower of rockets. The Marathas fought bravely for a short time; but their leader was killed or fled, their line was broken, and they were utterly routed with enormous slaughter[1].

Such a decisive victory has usually been followed in Asia by the rise of a new dynasty and the establishment of an extensive dominion. Yet although the Marathas were clean swept out of northern India for the time, and although Ahmed Shah represented precisely the type

[1] We have a stirring description of this famous battle by a native eye-witness, who was with Ahmed Shah on the field.

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of those Asiatic conquerors who had hitherto founded imperial houses at Delhi or Agra, it is a remarkable fact that the results of Paniput were quite disproportionate to the magnitude of the exploit. If Ahmed Shah had consolidated in the Punjab a powerful kingdom resting on Afghanistan beyond the Indus, and stretching southward down to Delhi and the Ganges, the history of India, and the fortunes of the English in that country, might have been very different. But his troops, laden with booty, insisted on retiring to their highlands; his hold on the northern provinces gradually relaxed; and the Punjab relapsed into confusion for the next forty years, until it fell under the short-lived dominion of the Sikhs. Some inroads were made, subsequently to Ahmed Shah's retirement, into India from Afghanistan; but Ahmed Shah's withdrawal practically closed the long line of conquering invaders from Central Asia, at a time very nearly simultaneous with the establishment in Bengal of the first conquerors that entered India by the sea.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE MARATHAS AND MYSORE (1765–1770).

SECTION I. *Lord Clive's policy in Bengal* (1765–1767).

To return to the affairs of the East India Company. The Marathas, in spite of their overthrow at Paniput, were still the most active and dangerous of the native powers in India; but since they embodied the principles of insatiable aggression and of irreconcilable hostility to Mahomedan predominance, the universal dread of their predatory incursions united all other chiefs and princes, especially the Mahomedans, against them. The result was advantageous to the English, for it drew towards them those who drew away from the Marathas. The Vizier of Oudh, who had now become the leading Mahomedan prince in upper India, and who had been again repulsed in a second attempt upon Bengal in 1765, now showed himself very willing to conclude an alliance with the Company. Lord Clive, a statesman no less than a soldier, whose despatches show admirable foresight and solidity of judgment, had returned to India in 1765 vested with plenary authority to reform the internal administration and to make peace abroad. He found

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the springs of government clogged by indiscipline and corruption; he suppressed resolutely the most glaring abuses; he reconstructed the administration with remarkable ability; and by two cardinal acts of public policy he settled the English dominion on a sure foundation within our territory and regulated our foreign relations.

The first of these acts was his acceptance for the Company of the *Diwáni*, whereby they were at once transformed from irresponsible chiefs of an armed trading association into responsible administrators of the territorial revenues; and thus acquired a direct interest in abolishing the peculation, scandalous frauds, and embezzlement that were rife in the country. The measure also put an end to the incessant disputes between the nominal government of the titular Nawáb of Bengal and the actual authority of the Company. 'The time now approaches,' wrote Clive, 'when we may be able to determine whether our remaining as merchants, subjected to the jurisdiction, encroachments, and insults of the Country Government, or the supporting your privileges and possessions by the sword, are likely to prove more beneficial to the Company,'—in other words, whether the Company should openly take up an attitude of independent authority. And he decided, rightly, that nothing else would give them a stable or legitimate position. They could not continue to maintain themselves by pulling the strings of native government, or by revolutionary methods whenever the machinery broke down; and as they could not abdicate power they were bound to take charge of its direction.

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The second of Clive's measures was the conclusion of the alliance with Oudh. After the war of 1764 with the Vizier it lay with the Company to choose between annexing, by right of conquest, some important districts situated on their north-western frontier, or attaching the Vizier to their interests by reinstating him in this tract of country, which he held by a very dubious title, and from which he might have been easily ousted. Lord Clive adopted without hesitation the latter alternative; he restored the districts to Oudh upon the grounds that every motive of sound policy weighed against extending the territorial possessions of the Company. This decision, he found, 'disappointed the expectations of many, who thought of nothing but a march with the emperor to Delhi. My resolution however was, and my hopes will be, to confine our assistance, our conquest, and our possessions to Bengal, Behár and Orissa. To go further is in my opinion a scheme so extravagantly ambitious and absurd, that no Governor and Council in their senses can adopt it, unless the whole system of the Company's interest be first entirely new re-modelled[1].' He therefore decided to maintain and strengthen Oudh as a friendly State interposed between Bengal and northern India. And the barrier-treaty[2] framed upon this principle by Lord Clive constituted the basis of our foreign policy upon that frontier up to the end of the century.

It should be understood that the prime object of those who at this critical epoch directed the affairs of the English in India, was to place a limit upon the expan-

[1] *Committee Reports*, 393, vol. iii. [2] August, 1765.

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sion of the Company's possessions, to put a sharp curb upon schemes of conquest, and to avoid any connexion with the native princes that might involve us in foreign war. But this was not because, as some have thought, the Company did not see whither they were drifting; it was because the outcome and irresistible tendencies of their situation were so clearly foreseen. To those who surveyed the prospect now before the English, and who could perceive that all the scattered fragments of the Moghul empire would be drawn by political gravitation towards any strong and coherent power, it was by this time plain that if the Company were ready to drop commerce for conquest, and to lay out another great dominion over the wide unoccupied spaces left by the subsidence of the Moghul empire, the site lay open for the builder, the work for those who could do it. No man saw more distinctly than Clive that after 1764, when our success against the Vizier of Oudh carried our arms beyond Bengal, the next step forward would commit us to an enterprise from which there would be no further possibility of drawing back.

'We have at last arrived,' he wrote in 1765, 'at that critical period which I have long foreseen, that period which renders it necessary to determine whether we can or shall take the whole to ourselves. Jáfir Ali Khan (the Nawáb of Bengal) is dead, and his natural son is a minor; Sujah Daulah (Vizier of Oudh) is beat from his dominions; we are in possession of it; and it is scarcely hyperbole to say that tomorrow the whole Moghul empire is in our power. The inhabitants of the country have no attachment to any obligation; their forces are neither disciplined, commanded, nor paid as ours are. Can it then be doubted that a large army of Europeans

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would effectually preserve us sovereigns, not only holding in awe the attempts of any country prince, but rendering us so truly formidable that no French, Dutch, or other enemy will presume to molest us?'

With this remarkable forecast of the possibilities which Clive earnestly counselled his employers to avoid, may be compared an extract from the concluding pages of Dow's history of Hindusthan, written in 1770, to show how accurately the possibilities of expansion had been calculated by cool and intelligent observers—

'Thus we have in a few words endeavoured to give a general idea of the present state of Hindusthan. It is apparent, from what has been said, that these immense regions might all be reduced by a handful of regular troops. Ten thousand European infantry, together with the Seapoys in the Company's service, are not only sufficient to conquer all India but, with proper policy, to maintain it for ages as an appendage to the British Crown. This position may at first sight appear a paradox to people unacquainted with the genius and disposition of the inhabitants of Hindusthan; but to those who have considered both with attention, the thing seems not only practicable but easy.'

And so, indeed, the thing turned out to be; for Dow's political speculations have been literally verified by the result, although his estimates of the military strength required, being founded on experience of warfare in South India and Bengal, are undoubtedly low. We see, therefore, that in the deliberate opinion of the best judges of the political situation, the English in India were already so strong that no opposition from the native powers could prevent their acquiring complete ascendancy. The enterprise was within their capacity, provided that no

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foreign rival again interfered; the only serious impediment lay in the not yet impossible reappearance on the scene of some other European nation, or of some powerful invader from Central Asia, who might establish himself in upper India while the English were still near the coasts. But all risk of transmarine intrusion had ceased for the time with the dislodgment of the French; and the well-trodden path of invasion through Afghanistan, which had been used for two thousand years by conquerors from Alexander the Great to Ahmed Shah Abdallee, was at last rapidly closing. Ahmed Shah had now founded the dynasty of the Amírs, who have for nearly one hundred and fifty years been the chiefs of a group of tribes firmly planted in the mountains and valleys of Afghanistan. This rugged highland country blocks all the roads from the Oxus and north-eastern Persia into India; it is a country, of free and martial races, strong enough to make a great civilized State think twice before attacking them, too weak and poor to give more than occasional annoyance to well-guarded frontiers.

It may be added that the north-western gates of India were soon to be double-locked against outside invasion. For while this independent Afghan kingdom formed an excellent barrier against all attempts to break into India from Central Asia by the only land routes through which an army can enter, the Afghans themselves were about this time barred off from the Punjab by the Sikhs. Towards the end of the last century the votaries of the Sikh faith, fanatically hostile to Islam, were gathering into a close association, whose stubborn fighting qualities and rapid political develop-

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ment under military chiefs were extending their power across upper India from the Sutlej to the Indus. They were thus erecting a second and inner barricade against inroads from Central Asia, which cut off the communications between Islam in India and the rest of the Mahomedan world.

Then below the Sutlej river, further to the south-east, there was a belt of Mahomedan principalities extending from Delhi to beyond Lucknow, holding all the rich central districts along the Jumna and Ganges, but threatened on the north and west by the Sikhs and Marathas. Of these principalities by far the most considerable was Oudh, whose territory covered the whole north-western flank of the Company's possessions in Bengal. We have seen that in 1765 a treaty of alliance was concluded with Oudh by Lord Clive; and as he at the same time contented the impoverished Moghul emperor by an ample allotment of revenue, the English had for the time nothing to fear from that quarter. Thus the jealousies and religious animosities of all these States, Hindu and Mahomedan, in north-western India constituted a kind of balance of power which, in addition to the politic alliances made by Lord Clive, explains the almost entire immunity from disturbance on their Bengal frontier enjoyed by the English for the next forty years.

Section II. *The Marathas and Hyder Ali in the South* (1767–69).

The year 1765, therefore, when we became in this manner firmly settled in Bengal, marks a halting place in the onward movement of our territorial expansion. Lord Clive so far succeeded in his intention 'absolutely

to bind our possessions and conquests to Bengal[1],' that our frontiers as then fixed by him did not materially advance until the end of the century, when the irruptions of the Marathas into the plains of northern India upset the equipoise that had preserved us from molestation. But the intervening period was by no means one of peace and tranquillity for the English in India. On the contrary, it was a time of constant war that severely strained our resources and occasionally placed our dominion in some jeopardy. After 1765 the scene shifts again; the stress of our contest with the native powers falls backward towards Madras and Bombay; the centres of urgent political pressure move for a time southward to the peninsula and towards the western sea-board; the conflicts that check and retard our expansion are against the Marathas in the centre of India and the Mahomedan rulers of Mysore.

The character and constitution of these two powers rendered them much more substantial antagonists than those whom the English had hitherto encountered in the Indian field. The incessant warfare prevailing throughout India during the past thirty years, and the great prizes that might be won by the sword, had brought into the arena a stronger class of combatants than most of the men who at the beginning of the empire's dissolution had found themselves by birth or accident in the front rank. Of this stronger class was Hyder Ali of Mysore, a man of great natural genius, who had raised himself entirely by superior daring, military instincts, and a faculty of managing the mercenary bands that

[1] Letter to Directors, 1765.

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were always attracted to the standard of a famous and fortunate leader. Of the same class were the chiefs or leaders of tribes, communities, or military association—like the Marathas, the Játs of Bhurtpore, the Sikhs of the Punjab, or the Rohillas—united by the tie, real or assumed, of common race, religion, or country, and drawn together for defence or attack into compact organizations upon a kind of national or territorial basis. Such groups were liable to be weakened by internal feuds and dissensions. But as they had some genuine root in the soil they have always possessed a higher vitality and much stronger resisting capacity than the forces of even such an able military despot as Hyder Ali of Mysore, with whom we began our new series of wars in the south. It will be found, speaking broadly, that all the really hard fighting done by the Anglo-Indian army has been against tribal or quasi-national associations,—against Marathas, Sikhs, or Afghans.

It was with the greatest reluctance that the English East India Company, after their acquisition of Bengal, set out again upon the road of political adventure and military expeditions. In a letter of 1767 to their President at Calcutta the London Directors say—

'The Dewanni of Bengal, Bahár, and Orissa, are the utmost limits of our view on that side of India. On the coast the protection of the Carnatic and the possession of the Sircars .... and on the Bombay side the dependencies thereon, with Salsette, Bassein, and the Castle of Surat. If we pass these bounds we shall be led from one acquisition to another, till we shall find no security but in the subjection of the whole, which, by dividing your force, would lose us the whole, and end in our extirpation from Hindusthan.'

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This letter had been written on receipt of intelligence that had alarmed and displeased the Honourable Court. The situation of the English on the south-east coast, although the French had been dislodged, was still far from secure. In Bengal the English were recognised masters of a rich inland province, free from any fear of attack by sea, and with their land frontier sheltered on its open side behind the allied kingdom of Oudh. But in Madras our territory ran along the sea-coast, and was only covered landward by an indefinite kind of protectorate over the Carnatic principality, then under the rulership of a not very trustworthy Nawáb. Two warlike and restless neighbours, Hyder Ali and the Marathas, hovered ominously about our borders; while our only ally, the Nizám of Hyderabad, was embarrassed and wavering politically.

Hyder Ali was the son of a soldier who had risen out of the crowd of common mercenaries to a petty command; and he himself had pushed his own fortunes much further by the ordinary method of employing his troops first in the service of a native State and afterwards in the prosecution of his own independent ambition. He had thus amassed some wealth, had gained notoriety as a military leader, had made himself master of Mysore, and was now seizing land in South India wherever he could lay hands on it. The superior craft and courage that he displayed began to alarm his neighbours, most of whom were engaged in similar proceedings. His principal enemies were the Marathas, with whom he had some sharp conflicts, and the Nizám of Hyderabad, from whose State he was tearing off large strips of territory;

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while from Mysore he could threaten the Carnatic, which the Madras government were seriously concerned to protect.

It was just about this time that Lord Clive, in settling the affairs of Bengal with the emperor Shah Álam, obtained from him a formal grant of the districts to the north of Madras called the Five Sirkars, out of which the English had driven Bussy's garrisons in 1759. The grant cost nothing to an emperor whose sovereignty had become purely nominal; but these districts, though under British occupation since they had been taken from the French, had never been formally ceded by the Nizám, who not unreasonably took offence at the transaction. However, being in straits for money and in fear of Hyder Ali, the Nizám was soon pacified by a treaty under which the Madras government pledged themselves rather vaguely to support him in case of war. They also entered into a friendly arrangement with a marauding Maratha chief, who had hired out 10,000 horsemen to the Nizám. Scarcely had the treaty been signed, when Hyder Ali poured a large force into the Hyderabad territory; whereupon the Nizám, acting upon the agreement, at once demanded and obtained from Madras a contingent of troops. Meanwhile the Maratha chief plundered the Mysore districts on his own account until Hyder Ali bought him off, when he departed home with his booty to evade the Nizám's claim for a share in it. The Nizám next marched, attended by the Madras contingent, toward Mysore; but instead of fighting he came to a private understanding with Hyder Ali, according to which both turned upon the Company. Some sharp

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skirmishing followed, in which the Nizám was so roughly handled by the English that he was glad to make terms separately; and the war was pressed against Hyder Ali alone, who soon proved himself an antagonist much more adroit and active than the ordinary Indian princes of whom the Company had military experience.

The campaign was very ill managed from Madras; the commanding officer was hampered by 'field deputies' to superintend his movements, and by roguish contractors; while the Marathas took the opportunity of making a plundering tour in the Carnatic. Nor was it until the country had been overrun by the Mysore cavalry close up to the outskirts of Madras and the finances of the Company considerably deranged, that a protracted and inglorious war was ended in 1769 by a treaty with Hyder Ali. The revenues of Madras would have been completely exhausted, if they had not been supplemented liberally, during the campaign, from Bengal; and the London Directors were exceedingly displeased at discovering that the money on which they relied for commercial investments in India, and for accommodating His Majesty's Ministers with treasury loans at home, had been dissipated in these barren operations, with no other profit than a practical lesson in the ways of Oriental statecraft and the value of Eastern allies. Moreover, if the beginning of the war was a political blunder, another and worse one was made in ending it. The treaty described all the contracting parties, of whom the principal were the English, Hyder Ali, and the Marathas, as reciprocally friends and allies of each other, provided that they did not become aggressors against one another; so that each

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party incurred a loose and vaguely worded obligation of assisting the others in the event of future hostilities. And as a similar compact had been made with the Nizám, the position of the Madras government was that they had become liable to be called upon to assist any of three turbulent princes whenever the next quarrel should break out among them. Accordingly, when in the following year the Marathas and the Mysore ruler came to blows, each of these two treaty-parties demanded aid from the English. The Madras government, having been sharply censured by the Directors for the last war, and being in no way anxious to strengthen either of these two very formidable neighbours at the expense of the other, were compelled to offend both of them by refusing to interfere in any manner whatever. The result was that the Marathas inflicted upon Hyder Ali some humiliating defeats, which he attributed to the faithless desertion of him by the English; and that he became thenceforward a vindictive enemy, watching for an occasion, which he soon found, of gratifying his resentment.

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CHAPTER X.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION.

SECTION I. *Parliamentary Enquiries.*

WE have now reached the threshold of that important period in the political history of British India which is covered by the long government of Warren Hastings, from 1772 to 1785. It was in this period that the contest for supremacy between the English and the military powers of India began in earnest, that the attention of Parliament became fixed upon Indian affairs, and that the organization of English government in India was for the first time seriously attempted.

When Lord Clive left in 1767, the Company had become the real rulers of Bengal; but although their position was still dissembled under the cloak of a nominal Nawábship, the disguise was almost worn threadbare. In Calcutta and Madras the Presidency Councils were exercising some direct authority beyond the town limits, and very large indirect power, as commanders of the troops and collectors of the revenue, throughout Bengal and the Carnatic. Yet in Bengal, although the whole public income was paid to the Company, they were under strict orders from London to abstain from all open interference

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with the rest of the administration. They disbursed to a Deputy Nawáb (for the Nawáb himself was now a mere pensioner) the costs of establishments; and they left the whole executive and judicial government nominally in his hands. Verelst, who succeeded Clive at Calcutta, writes that the President and Council 'are repeatedly and peremptorily forbidden to avow any public authority in our names over the native officers, and enjoined to retain our primitive characters of merchants with the most scrupulous delicacy.' The consequences were but too evidently exemplified in the decline of commerce and cultivation, the diminution of specie, and the general distress; for the native officers were uncontrolled, while the Company received an immense revenue without possessing the means of protecting the people who paid it. Against such a system Verelst protested generously; and a futile attempt to mitigate its evils was made by appointing a few English servants of the Company to supervise the native agency.

It was not, however, until 1773 that the executive and judicial administration of the country was placed on a regular, though imperfect footing, by parliamentary ordinance. Up to this time Anglo-Indian annals have recorded the vicissitudes of a contest, first, between commercial companies; next, between maritime nations; latterly between one powerful Company representing the successful nation, and the native Indian princes. This latest stage of the contest was in reality no more than a part of the general disorderly conflict prevailing all over India, in which the weak fragmentary States that had at first been manufactured out of the provinces of

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the dismembered empire were now being in their turn trampled under the feet of hardier rulerships. The work of the English had hitherto been mainly destructive, because the exigencies of self-defence compelled them to strike down their antagonists. But the era now opening will introduce their first essays at reconstruction, for in Bengal the English had by this time cleared for themselves a good political building site, and the chronicle of interminable straggling wars is henceforward to be varied by attempts at administrative organization.

In England, although State interference with private enterprise had never been a popular duty, there was growing up a conviction that it had become necessary to place the doings of the East India Company under national control. The British people had at this time reached a very high degree of settled civilization under institutions that secured to them almost complete civil and religious liberty. They found themselves involuntarily responsible for a country plunged into violent disorder, where no species of government except illimitable personal despotism, usually of foreigners, had been known for many centuries. Into this country they had to import, from a great distance, the principles of civilized polity; so that their first experiment at regulating the affairs of Bengal may be regarded as the beginning of a vast constitutional innovation that has since been extended, with many mistakes and some mishaps, but in the end with remarkable success, throughout the whole of India.

It was the astonishing acquisition of so rich a province as Bengal, and the discreditable sight of a few commercial

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agents handling the wealth of a kingdom, that roused the attention of the British Parliament, and enforced the necessity of looking into the condition of affairs in India. In 1765 Lord Clive had estimated the whole gross revenue of Bengal, from all sources, at four millions sterling, and the net income of the Company, after payment of all expenses, at £1,650,000. Having become the possessors of so magnificent a property, the Court of Directors were raising their dividend; their stock went up to 267; their shareholders divided 12½ per cent. in 1767; and their servants brought home large fortunes to be employed in buying country seats and parliamentary boroughs. Alderman Beckford expressed in the House of Commons his hope that the rich acquisitions of the Company in the East would be made a means of relieving the people of England from some of their burdens. Nor was the British Government backward in acting upon the hint; since the system of granting renewals of the Company's charter for short periods afforded excellent opportunities of making fresh terms in proportion to the market price of the concession.

In 1766, upon an intimation from the Prime Minister that the affairs of the East India Company would probably occupy the attention of Parliament during the approaching session, there ensued a long bargaining discussion between the Government and the Company, which produced a law binding the Company for a term of years to pay £400,000 annually to the Crown. From a subsequent enquiry it appeared in 1773 that the Company's annual expenses had increased since the year 1765 from £700,000 to the enormous sum of £1,700,000. It

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also appeared that from 1765 the British Government had received by the net duties, the indemnity upon tea, and the yearly payment of £400,000, little less than two millions annually from the Company[1]; so that the British nation took heavy blackmail upon the Company's gains, however they may have been gotten. These payments represented, in fact, the tribute or royalty levied by the State upon the great territorial revenues recently acquired by Clive's victories. But with the possession of these revenues had come a change in the Company's commercial system, for in 1767 began the practice of making what were called Investments, that is, of employing a large portion of the surplus public revenue collected from the province in buying goods, raw produce and manufactures, for exportation to Europe. It followed, as Burke said, that whereas in other countries revenue arises out of commerce, in Bengal the whole foreign maritime trade, of which the Company had a monopoly, was fed by the revenue. The consequence of this steady strain upon the production of the country soon began to be felt. Moreover, after Clive's departure from India in 1767, the withdrawal of his resolute clearheaded dictatorship was immediately felt throughout all departments of the administration; official discipline became again relaxed; the finances suffered a relapse into extravagance and malversation, and the agents of government still meddled in private trade. The Madras Presidency drifted into that ruinous war with Hyder Ali that has been already described; and in 1770 a terrible famine had desolated Bengal. Under the system of annual elections to the Directorship the Com-

[1] *Annual Register*, 1773, p. 76.

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pany at home were demoralized by party contests and violent internal dissensions. Yet notwithstanding all these concurrent evils and mishaps no serious enquiry was taken up in Parliament until the Company declared themselves to be not only unable to continue the annual tribute of £400,000, but also so overloaded with debt as to need a large loan from the English treasury. This scandalous confession of insolvency naturally placed the misdoings of the Company before Lord North's ministry in a very different and much stronger light, arrested their earnest attention, and convinced them of the immediate necessity for radical reform.

The general circumstances of the time, also, were bringing about changes and amendments. Lord Clive said truly that the affairs of the East Indies were in fact partaking of the general confusion then spreading over the immense transmarine possessions of Great Britain, which had been acquired so recently and rapidly that there had been no time to set them in order. The English people had yet to discover the nature of their responsibility for the tutelage of subject or alien races, and for the proper management of countries differing so widely in origin, character, and situation as North American colonies and Indian provinces. They had as yet no experience in the difficult art of ruling distant and diverse populations on so broad a scale. Nor could the whole range of modern history furnish them with any useful precedent, seeing that all previous experiments in the government of dependencies may be pronounced, by a very moderate standard of ethics and efficiency, to have failed. But the comparatively long interval of peace in

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Europe, so far as England was concerned, that followed the termination in 1763 of the Seven Years' War, gave leisure and opportunity for looking into the state of our outlying property. The nation began to take stock of the vast accession to its estate beyond sea which had been won by its naval and military successes; and the novel sense of duty towards India was undoubtedly stimulated by a general feeling that a trading association had no business with the revenues of a great kingdom.

The urgency of the case, and certain symptoms of rising popular indignation, combined to press the Government into active interference with the Company, whose financial embarrassments left them in no position to resist an enquiry ordered by the House of Commons, or to dispute the right of the nation to deal as it chose with their territorial acquisitions. They tried hard, then and afterwards, to shelter themselves from Parliamentary interposition under the shadow of the nominal sovereignty of the Delhi emperor, from whom they pretended to hold their land. In maintaining this doctrine they acted upon the advice of Lord Clive, who, although in 1765 he accepted the Diwáni because the assumption of some kind of legitimate authority over Bengal was unavoidable, nevertheless still affirmed that for the Company to declare themselves politically independent was very far from expedient. Consequently the law courts and the police were still in charge of native officers, superintended to some little extent by the Company's agents, but under separate judicial and executive departments which the Company did not undertake to administer.

But the essence of government is to be one and

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indivisible, so that the machine will not run unless all the driving power centres ultimately under one prime mover, whether it be an autocratic prince or a democratic assembly. In Bengal the outcome of this divided responsibility, after Clive's departure, was masterless confusion. The magistracy, the police, and the revenue officers, being diverse bodies working upon different systems with conflicting interests under no common head, vied with each other in mismanagement; there were no positive laws and there was very little justice in the country. Moreover, the three Presidencies made wars and alliances independently of each other: the Company's standing army in India amounted to over 11,000 men; and the increased civil and military establishments involved expenditure that entrenched greatly upon the funds for commercial investment. Fortunately this dilapidation of the Honourable Company's revenue produced a fall of their stock which brought home to them a conviction that they were on the downward path to some distressing predicament. They applied for financial assistance to the Ministers, who answered by appointing two Select Committees 'to enquire into the state, nature, and condition of the Company, and of British affairs in the East Indies.'

It is true that the Parliament had hitherto been much more disposed to pass abstract resolutions than to affirm sovereign rights and to act upon them in India. When in 1762 the French negotiators for peace demanded restitution of districts that had been taken from them during the war, the English representatives met the claim by demurring to 'any right of the Crown of England to interfere in the legal and exclusive property of a body

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corporate.' And subsequently Burke, being at the time not hostile to the Company, described their possessions as 'held in virtue of grants from the Delhi emperor, in the nature of offices and jurisdictions dependent on his Crown; a very anomalous species of power and property quite unknown to the ancient constitution of England.' His view then was that the terrors of a Parliamentary enquiry were hung over the Company mainly with the object of levying contributions for the Exchequer's benefit. There was much truth in this; and it was partly as a set-off against those contributions that the Company were licenced to export duty free to North America the tea which the intractable colonists flung into Boston harbour. But Lord North, who now ruled both Houses with an overwhelming majority, was adverse to the Company; the Committees brought up condemnatory reports; and the Commons passed resolutions declaring that all acquisitions made under the influence of a military force, or by treaty with foreign princes, do of right belong to the State. A motion was made arraigning Clive's proceedings in Bengal as dishonourable and detrimental to the nation. Clive defended himself vigorously, laying about him on all sides; and the motion was rejected, without division, in favour of a resolution 'that Robert Lord Clive did render great and meritorious services to his country.' His death in the following year[1] closed the career of this high-spirited, courageous, indefatigable man. His daring and his sagacity, his singular talent for politics and his genius for war, produced in Lord Clive a rare

[1] November, 1774.

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combination of qualities exactly fitted to the circumstances of his time in India.

Section II. *The first governing Constitution.*

Of the two Acts that were eventually passed in 1773, one enabled the Ministers to lend the Company £1,400,000 to discharge their obligations; the other changed the constitution of the Company, and gave a Parliamentary title to their administration in India. To these matters, to the re-arrangement of the governing body at home, and to the reform of the system abroad, the scope of Lord North's Regulating Act was carefully confined. The territorial acquisitions and revenues were still to be retained by the Company for the term of their charter; and the uncertain ground of sovereign prerogative was evaded by founding the enactment upon 'the eminent dominion of Parliament over every British subject in every concern.' The Courts of the Directors and Proprietors in London were re-constituted upon a more oligarchic model by raising the money qualifications and reducing the numbers. In India the Governor-General and Council were established for Bengal (the first appointments to be made by Parliament) with a general authority over the three Presidencies, under a rule whereby a majority of votes in the Council determined all disputed questions. And a supreme Court of Justice, having a very ill-defined jurisdiction, was set up side by side with the Governor-Generalship in Calcutta.

It is easy now to perceive that this ill-constructed governing machinery, which stands towards our latest systems in the same relation as does the earliest traction engine to the present locomotive, contravened some

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primary principles of administrative mechanics. When in Asia it becomes necessary to organize a new régime in a country acquired from a native ruler by cession or conquest, the first thing needful is to fix the chief local authority, arming him with ample though well-defined powers, to be used in general subordination to the central government. What these powers should be depends upon the circumstances of the case, upon the character of the people, the state of their society, and often upon the distance of the new province from headquarters. The executive and judicial departments may be quite separate, or they may be more or less under the same superior control; in any case the jurisdictions, and the laws or rules applicable to the community, are plainly marked out and promulgated. In all cases due provision is made for empowering one chief governing person to decide at once, and on his own responsibility, in emergencies. But in 1773 the chief executive authority at Calcutta was vested in a majority of the Council —the Governor-General having only a casting vote— so that in a government where promptitude and unity of action were all-important every order was arguable, and where opinions differed no measure passed without violent controversy. Then the boundaries between the executive and judicial powers were also left to be discovered by incessant conflict, producing a kind of border warfare in which each party made reprisals. In the midst of all this turmoil the sovereign power remained ambiguous and formally in abeyance, and Parliament, the only umpire acknowledged by both sides, was at the distance of a six months' voyage.

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Thus the main obstacles to the smooth working of the new constitution were, first, the entire dependence of the Governor-General on the votes of his Council; secondly, the conflict of jurisdictions; and lastly, the want of a supreme legislative authority, nearer than England, to arbitrate in these quarrels and to mark off the proper sphere of the executive and judicial departments. The Governor-General could make no laws that the judges condescended to notice. On the other hand the judges claimed, upon one ground or another, a general power of entertaining complaints against the acts of the executive government and its officers, and of issuing orders tending to reduce the administration to the status of a subaltern agency, whose proceedings might be reviewed by the judges at their discretion. The capital question of sovereignty stood open to be explained theoretically according to the interests or contentions of either side. It might be colourably argued, on the part of the Company, that they held the country by grants from the Delhi emperor and treaties with native princes, whereby the jurisdiction of the judges appointed by the King of England was greatly restricted, and as it were cut off at base. Or it might be maintained that all the possessions of the Company fell naturally to the Crown, whence it followed that the writs of the Supreme Court ran wherever the Company exercised public authority, that the judges at Calcutta could control the native courts, and that the procedure of Westminster Hall was applicable to every Bengalee landholder. For since jurisdiction was given by the statute over all servants of the Company, it was held by the Court that the whole body

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of landowners in Bengal, who collected the land revenue and paid over the State's share to the Company, might fall within their purview. At any rate, if any one demurred to the jurisdiction, he was held bound to appear to plead his objection before the Judges; although the cost and trouble of answering a summons to Calcutta might be ruinous to a native in the interior districts.

With a prolix and costly procedure, with strange unintelligible powers resembling the attributes of some mysterious divinity, the Supreme Court was soon regarded by the natives as an engine of outlandish oppression rather than as a bulwark against executive tyranny. 'So far,' says Burke's Report, 'as your Committee have been able to discover, the Court has been generally terrible to the natives, and has distracted the government of the country without substantially reforming one of its abuses.' In this atmosphere of doubt as to the country's ownership and its title-deeds and as to the limits of the two great administrative provinces, complications, acrimonious controversy, and even collisions necessarily ensued. The Council and the Court were ranged in two hostile camps set over against each other on the borderland of debateable jurisdictions. The Company's officers claimed illimitable authority over the people of Bengal in revenue matters; the Judges affirmed the duty of protecting the people from fiscal injustice; and for either contention very fair arguments might be found. The Judges were quite as much bent on asserting their own power as on protecting the natives of India, while to the Council any sort of control or check upon their fiscal operations was highly inconvenient. The truth is that outside

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Calcutta there were at that period no laws at all, and that the Company had no regular authority and very little inclination to make any.

Out of these causes and complications arose the celebrated disputes between Warren Hastings and his Council, which kept the Governor-General and his councillors at bitter feud with each other except when they united in a quarrel with the Supreme Court of Judicature. These matters fall within the scope of this narrative only so far as they illustrate an early stage in the experimental process of adjusting English institutions to the conditions of an Asiatic dependency; for it is otherwise superfluous to tell over again an often-told story. The system of administration set up by the Act of 1773 embodied the first attempt at giving some definite and recognisable form to the vague and arbitrary rulership that had devolved upon the Company. From that date forward this outline of Anglo-Indian government was gradually filled in. The administrative centre was now at any rate distinctly located at Calcutta with the Governor-General as its acknowledged head, invested with the chief control of the foreign relations of the three Presidencies and deriving his authority from a statute of the English Parliament. Thus far the foundation had been laid on broad and permanent lines; but the work of interior organization was scarcely begun, and it remained for Warren Hastings to persevere in building up the fabric of administration under the stress of discord in Council, political complications, foreign wars, and every kind of financial embarrassment.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE GOVERNOR-GENERALSHIP OF WARREN HASTINGS (1774–1785).

SECTION I. *The Rohilla war* (1774).

WARREN HASTINGS did not take his seat as first Governor-General in India until 1774; but from 1772, when he went to Calcutta as Governor of the Bengal Presidency, until his final departure in the spring of 1785, the whole course and character of Anglo-Indian history bear the impress of his personality, and are connected with his name.

At the time of his taking office the power of the Marathas, which had been accumulating for a hundred years, was threatening every prince and State in India from the Sutlej river southward to Cape Comorin. The shattering overthrow that they had suffered at Paniput in 1761 had expelled them from the Punjab. Yet in Western India they were supreme; in Rájputana and central India they plundered and ransomed at their leisure, and they were incessantly making predatory excursions north-eastward into the fertile plains watered by the Ganges and the Jumna, to harry the lands of the Oudh Vizier, of Rohilcund, and of the Mahomedan

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chiefships about Delhi, Agra, and Allahabad. Although the Maratha armies subsisted by freebooting, and their leaders were rough uneducated captains whose business it was to levy contributions and seize territory, their civil administration, especially the whole collection of revenue in conquered lands, was managed by Brahmins, by far the ablest class of officials then existing in India. The Maratha tactics were to overrun a country with swarms of light horsemen, harassing and exhausting their opponents, exacting heavy contributions if they retired, or rackrenting the land scientifically if they settled down on it. By this combination of skilful irregularity in war and methodical absorption of a country's wealth the leaders were able to keep on foot great roving armies, which were the terror of every other Indian power. The unwieldy State of Hyderabad, notwithstanding its size, was no match for them; they were too numerous and active even for such an eminent professor of their own predatory science as Hyder Ali of Mysore; and they descended annually, like a chronic plague, upon the Rohillas and the Oudh Vizier, who could barely hold against them the large provinces that they had secured out of the partition of the Empire. Everything pointed to the Marathas as destined to be the foremost rivals of the English in the impending contest for ascendancy. And in fact no native power other than the Marathas did oppose any solid resistance to the spread of our dominion in upper India, until the Sikhs, long afterwards, crossed the Sutlej in 1846.

When Warren Hastings assumed the government of Bengal in 1772, the different Maratha chiefs were just

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beginning to found separate rulerships, without abandoning their confederacy under the Peshwa. And from 1774, during the whole of his Governor-Generalship, the state and course of the East India Company's foreign affairs were governed principally by our varying relations with these chiefs. Hastings found that a Maratha army had made its annual irruption into the districts north-west of Bengal, where the emperor Shah Álam, who had been living at Allahabad on the revenues assigned to him by Clive in 1765, solicited and obtained their assistance towards recovering his capital. Under their patronage he had been replaced on his throne in 1771, but the Marathas treated his kingship as a mere pageant, using his name as a pretext for seizing more districts, and leaving him almost destitute in the midst of a plentiful camp. They were now swarming about the north country and rapidly gaining the upper hand of all the Mahomedan princes. What concerned the English more particularly, was that they were demanding, in the emperor's name, surrender of the districts of Kora and Allahabad which had been made over to him by the Company when he granted the Diwáni. For since these districts bordered on Bengal as well as on Oudh, their occupation by the Marathas would have been equally fatal to the security of both territories.

On the northern frontier of Oudh, in the angle between the line of the Himalayas and the Upper Ganges, lay the country possessed by the Rohilla Afghans, forming an important section of the general line of defence against the Marathas, who had broken through in 1771 and now reappeared in 1772. As Oudh covered the open side

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of Bengal, Rohilcund covered the exposed frontier of Oudh; so when the Rohillas implored the Vizier to succour them, the Vizier, fearing for his own dominions, asked the English to co-operate against the common enemy. The Calcutta Government sent up an English brigade under Sir Robert Barker, instructing him to make a demonstration in support of the Vizier, and to act generally on his side in any negotiations. A treaty was arranged between the Vizier and the Rohillas, and attested by the English commander, whereby the Vizier agreed to drive off the Marathas on payment by the Rohillas of a stipulated subsidy. The Marathas soon afterwards retired of their own accord into quarters for the rainy season; but early in 1773 they again menaced Rohilcund, and this time the combined forces of Oudh, the Rohillas, and the English marched against them. When they had been compelled to withdraw the Vizier demanded payment of his subsidy, but Háfiz Rehmat Khan, the principal Rohilla chief, sent evasive answers; whereupon the Vizier addressed himself to the English, whose commander had attested, though he had in no way guaranteed, the engagement.

Out of these transactions arose the Rohilla War, which brought down such violent obloquy and so much loose parliamentary invective upon Hastings, against whom it has always been charged as a dark political crime. The whole situation was overspread by a network of transparent intrigue. The Vizier suspected that the Rohilla chiefs, who were a band of Afghan usurpers in an imperial province, might on emergency join the Marathas against him; nor indeed was there any par-

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ticular reason why they should not do so, since the Vizier himself had been seriously meditating over a proposal from the Marathas that he should join them in an attack upon the Rohillas, and in making a partition of their country. But he was wise enough to see that by joining a band of robbers to plunder his neighbour's house he would bring them the sooner to his own door; and on the whole he thought the safer step would be an alliance with the English, whose troops would make him sure of success in the field, and whose avowed interest lay in strengthening him as a barrier against the Marathas. The Vizier, therefore, at an interview with the Governor-General at Benares in 1773, desired the assistance of an English force to put him in possession of Rohilcund, alleging that the Rohillas had broken their treaty by withholding the subsidy, and promising liberal payment for the service. To this proposition Hastings, after some deliberation and hesitation on both sides, finally consented. 'Our ally,' he wrote to his Council, 'would obtain by this acquisition a complete compact State shut in effectually from foreign invasions by the Ganges, while he would remain equally accessible to our forces either for hostility or protection. It would give him wealth, of which we shall partake, and give him security without any dangerous increase of power; . . . by bringing his frontier nearer to the Marathas, for whom singly he is no match, it would render him more dependent on us and connect the union more firmly between us.' Accordingly the united forces invaded Rohilcund in the spring of 1774; the Rohillas were well led and fought bravely, but they could not stand against the English

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troops, and after some gallant charges they were defeated, Háfiz Rehmat Khan was killed, and their power was utterly broken. Rohilcund was annexed to the possessions of the Vizier, who thereby acquired the country lying east of the upper Ganges up to the Himalayas, with a strong frontage on the river against attacks from the west.

The result, from the point of view of English political interests, was to complete our defensive position towards the north-west by substituting a safe and submissive ally for untrustworthy neighbours upon an important section of the barrier, and it is certain that the plan succeeded. For many years afterwards our north-west frontier remained undisturbed, until in the beginning of the nineteenth century the English took up ground beyond it. Nevertheless this advantage was gained by an unprovoked aggression upon the Rohillas, with whom we had been on not unfriendly terms; nor is Warren Hastings' policy in this matter easily justifiable even upon the elastic principle that enjoins the governor of a distant dependency to prefer above all other considerations the security of the territory entrusted to him.

Section II. *War with the Marathas* (1776–1782), *and with Mysore* (1778–1783).

The Rohilla campaign was the only war directly planned and undertaken by Hastings; although he was constantly engaged during seven stormy years, beginning in 1776, with the support and supervision of military operations. From this time forward up to the end of the century, the battlefields are all in the west and south of

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India. In Bengal the subsidiary alliance with Oudh remained the cornerstone of our defensive system; nor was that province ever invaded, though often threatened, by the Maratha armies. But in Bombay the President and Council, being anxious to distinguish themselves by the acquisition of territory—especially of Salsette, which is close to Bombay—entered into a covenant with a Maratha chief named Rughonáth Rao, who had been ejected from power at Poona, to replace him at the head of the Maratha government, stipulating for the cession, in return, of certain districts to the Company. The object of the Bombay President was to obtain political ascendancy at Poona and to make his Presidency pay its way by an increase of land revenue; but the plan was very badly laid, and the means adopted quite inadequate for the ends in view. When the Calcutta government received from Bombay a copy of the treaty with Rughonáth Rao, they at once condemned totally the measures that had been taken, declaring the war 'impolitic, dangerous, unauthorized, and unjust,' and protesting against the Bombay Presidency having imposed on itself 'the charge of conquering the whole Maratha empire for a man who appeared incapable of affording effectual assistance in the undertaking.' They foretold, rightly, that the enterprise would only embark them upon an indefinite sea of troubles: and they peremptorily ordered the Company's forces to be withdrawn, if it could be done without danger. But before this letter could reach Bombay the expedition had started; Salsette and Bassein, two very important points, had been forcibly occupied; and when the Bombay troops had been sharply defeated in the first

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action with the Marathas at Arras, it was impossible to withdraw honourably. So Hastings now insisted that we must stand to our ground and face our reverses; reinforcements were sent across India, and attempts were made at negotiation with the Marathas, who were justly incensed by these proceedings.

In this manner we became entangled in a long, costly, and unprofitable war, which may be taken to have been the original source of the interminable hostilities which occupied Hastings for the next seven years, straining his finances, damaging his reputation, distracting his administration, and bringing both Bombay and Madras at different moments into serious jeopardy. Any attempt to give a brief and also intelligible narrative of the straggling inconclusive fighting that went on must inevitably fail. The essence of the whole matter is that the Marathas were at this period far too strong and too well united to be shaken or overawed by such forces as the English could despatch against them. They held in the centre of India a position which enabled them to threaten all the three divided English Presidencies, to intrigue successfully against us at Hyderabad and Mysore, and to communicate with the French by their ports on the western seacoast. The two minor Presidencies of Bombay and Madras were governed by rash incompetent persons who were exceedingly jealous of the Governor-General's superior authority, who disregarded his advice or orders, and thwarted his policy; while Hastings himself was hampered by opposition in his own Council and by enemies at headquarters in London. If he had been able to draw back at once out of the war, and to insist on making

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peace with the Marathas, he might have escaped the graver complications that followed upon the original blunder of attacking them. But Salsette and Bassein were still held by the English, and the refusal of the Marathas to cede these valuable points protracted the negotiations up to the end of 1776, when a turn of European politics materially affected, as usual, the situation in India.

By this time the United States had declared their independence, and England had now become so deeply involved in the attempt to put down rebellion in North America, that the French determined to use such an apparently excellent opportunity of revenge for the injuries suffered during the Seven Years' War. Providence, said the French minister in a secret State paper, has marked out this moment for the humiliation of England; and accordingly the colonists were actively though surreptitiously assisted by France, to a degree that made a rupture with that power unavoidable. A French agent reached India in 1777 to propose alliance with the Marathas on conditions including the cession of a seaport on the west coast. His overtures, which were naturally encouraged by the Peshwa at Poona, filled with alarm and indignation the English, to whom the actual state of affairs in Europe, India, and America rendered the prospect of such a combination exceedingly disagreeable. In the same year Hastings received secret information from the British embassy at Paris that the French were concerting a scheme for an expedition to India in support of our enemies there. In 1778 came news that Burgoyne had surrendered to the Americans at Saratoga, and that

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France, probably also Spain, were declaring war; while already a French ship from Bourbon Island had actually landed officers and military stores on the south coast for Hyder Ali.

Although at this moment the dissension between Hastings and Philip Francis in the Calcutta Council was fierce and bitter, yet the Governor-General carried with a high hand his energetic measures for meeting these dangers. All the French settlements in India were seized; a force was despatched from Bengal to reinforce Bombay, and under the stress of the emergency the Governor-General determined to throw aside a treaty just settled with the Marathas, and to sanction another march upon Poona in support of Rughonáth Rao. In modern times the device of supporting pretenders to a foreign throne has fallen into disuse among civilized States, even when they are at war; partly because international law disapproves, if it does not condemn, the proceeding, but mainly because a long series of experiments has proved that such enterprises only exasperate the enemy, and as political expedients are generally foredoomed to failure. Yet in Europe it was once an ordinary method of vexing or weakening an antagonist, and in Asia it is still a very popular kind of adventure; while Anglo-Indian history contains several examples that are invariably warnings. Thus the backing of Rughonáth Rao for the Maratha premiership turned out a disastrous speculation, for the second expedition ended in ignominious failure. Its leaders, civil and military, blundered signally and retreated disgracefully; the pretender fled back into exile; and nothing was gained except the just and enduring resent-

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ment of the Marathas. The Bombay government, says Grant Duff, had desperately sent a handful of men against the Maratha empire, and had committed the conduct of such an enterprise to men totally unfit for such a charge; the truth being that the Marathas were at that time, and nearly up to the end of the century, at least a match for the English.

After this second discomfiture in the field, and after the miscarriage of some very diplomatic attempts to detach some of the leading chiefs from the Maratha confederacy — attempts in which he was outwitted by those adepts in subtle statecraft — Hastings found himself caught in the meshes of protracted war with a loose, active, shifty, and indefatigable enemy, who knew well how to stir up trouble for him in various parts of India. Hyder Ali of Mysore, who had been for some years husbanding his resources and biding his time in the peninsula, now began to disclose ominous symptoms of the vindictive spirit that had been fermenting in his implacable mind, ever since the English had abandoned him to the Marathas in 1769. When the Calcutta government determined to seize the French settlements, orders had been sent to Madras that Mahé, which belonged to France, should be occupied without delay; because this port, in the extreme south-west of the Indian peninsula, might become an important channel of communication between the French and Mysore. It is conceivable that this may have been precisely the reason why Hyder Ali preferred that the place should be left under his protection; at any rate he desired the Madras authorities not to meddle with it,

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adding that since Mahé was within his jurisdiction and the inhabitants were his subjects, he might find it necessary to defend them if they were attacked. Nevertheless Mahé was taken by an English detachment in 1779, at a moment when Hyder Ali was engaged in picking off some outlying districts belonging to the Marathas, having naturally availed himself of the quarrel between them and the English to round off his own possessions. Such a disregard of his express interdict gave the Mysore ruler serious umbrage, which was not lessened by the imprudent attempt of an English force to march across a part of his territory without his permission.

Throughout all this period—that is, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century—the balance of power in India rested upon a kind of triangular equipoise between the English, the Marathas, and Mysore. If two of these powers quarrelled, the third became predominant for the time; if two of them united, the third was in jeopardy. This is what had happened in 1778, when the alarm of war with France drove the Anglo-Indian Government into precipitate measures that embroiled us first with the Marathas and secondly with Mysore, and consequently brought down upon us the combined hostility of both. By the summer of 1780 the fortunes of the English in India had fallen to their lowest watermark. At Calcutta the resources of Bengal were drained by the cost of distant and protracted war, and cramped, as Hastings said, by internal imbecility; for the Governor-General was still contending against perverse and obstructive colleagues, one of whom, Francis, he at last quieted by a pistol shot. At Bombay the

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funds were so completely exhausted that the Council reported, as their best reason for keeping the troops on active service abroad, their inability to pay them at home. In the south Hyder Ali had made peace with the Marathas, had forced the Nizám of Hyderabad into the triple alliance against the English, and in July (1780) had descended from the hills upon the plains of the Carnatic with an immense army. All premonitory signs of coming danger had been treated at Madras with inattention and contempt. Sir Thomas Rumbold, a corrupt and incapable governor, departing homeward in the spring, had recorded in a farewell minute his satisfaction at leaving the southern Presidency in perfect tranquillity; yet a few months later Hyder Ali, whose preparations had long been notorious, burst upon the low country like a thunderstorm, and his cavalry ravaged the Carnatic up to the suburbs of Madras[1]. The English troops sent to oppose him were routed; the treasury was empty; there were no supplies in the town, which might easily have been taken if Hyder Ali had resolutely assailed it in force.

Hastings lost no time in despatching from Calcutta money and reinforcements under Sir Eyre Coote, who managed to drive off Hyder Ali from the vicinity of the Presidency town; but the irruption had dislocated all the Governor-General's plans. He had now both Mysore and the Marathas simultaneously on his hand. His finances were exhausted; his military strength over-strained; his attempts to create disunion among the

[1] Burke's description of this irruption stands as a model of splendid rhetoric. [Speech on the Nawáb of Arcot's debts.]

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Maratha chiefs had been frustrated; he had to fight one of them, Sindia, in the north-west near Gwalior, another, the Peshwa, near Bombay; and his offers of peace on terms very favourable to the Marathas were ill received. Sindia, who was fast becoming the most powerful chief of the Maratha federation, had by this time extended his conquests from central India northward towards Agra and Delhi; but although this forward movement threatened the flank of Bengal, yet it also brought him within striking distance from our strongest position. After several sharp skirmishes with the English troops, and the loss of the fortress of Gwalior taken by escalade [a brilliant and daring exploit of Captain Popham, one of the forgotten Anglo-Indian heroes], Sindia discovered that his interest lay in coming to an understanding. It was arranged that he should be allowed to prosecute his designs upon the few districts round Delhi still retained by the Moghul emperor, on condition of his mediating between the English and the Maratha government. In this manner, after considerable sacrifices, Hastings at last succeeded in terminating, by a treaty made in May 1782, a war that was neither honourable to the English name nor advantageous to their interests, and out of which arose those exigencies which drove him into the transactions that formed the main grounds of his subsequent impeachment. In 1780 the vast expense for the subsistence and defence of both Madras and Bombay had, as he wrote, reduced him to the most mortifying financial extremities. It was under the pressure of these embarrassments that he demanded a heavy subsidy from the Rája of Benares, which aroused

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a famous insurrection. Under the same stress of financial hunger caused by an empty military chest, he subjected the Oudh Begums and their eunuchs to coercion for the purpose of compelling the payment of money which the Begums had no right to withhold, although it is more than questionable whether the Governor-General should have used such means to obtain it. The particulars of these two transactions have been so repeatedly and recently given, that an allusion to them seems here sufficient.

The diffusion and versatility of the Maratha armies had made them very troublesome enemies; and from their headquarters at Poona, above the passes leading down to the western coast, they overhung and could always menace Bombay. But their coalition was weakened for consistent action by mutual distrust among the chiefs, who were now supplanting the Peshwa's authority in the Maratha empire, as the Peshwa had previously wrested the sovereignty from the heirs of Sivaji. Whereas Hyder Ali's forces obeyed the will of one ruler—strongly entrenched with an effective army in the angle of the Indian peninsula, commanding access to the plains round Madras and to the sea-coast on both sides—whose position, ability, and warlike energy all rendered him a most formidable antagonist in any single campaign. Hyder Ali had long perceived that the weakness of India and the strength of England lay in the defenceless condition of the Indian sea-board. He had himself made strenuous exertions to organize a naval armament; and in his present war against the English he was relying upon the arrival of a French squadron which was known

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to be fitting out at Bourbon Island with the design of breaking the communications between England and India.

When, in 1781, this squadron appeared on the Coromandel coast, Hyder Ali was employing himself in reducing the scattered posts of the English in the Carnatic, which were wholly at his mercy; and if the French could have co-operated he would have taken the important town of Cuddalore. But the French admiral sailed back to Bourbon; Hyder Ali was pressed by Sir Eyre Coote, and at last brought to bay at Porto Novo, where he was crippled by a heavy defeat which restored the open country to the English. Thus it came to pass that when Suffren, than whom France has never had a better admiral, returned to the coast in 1782 with a much larger fleet, he was met by a strong though unequal force of English ships under Sir Edward Hughes, and found Hyder comparatively disabled. All the possessions of the French and the Dutch had been occupied by the English; so that Suffren had no base of supplies or repair upon the Indian sea-board[1]. He succeeded in landing 2000 French troops, which were soon joined by a large contingent from Hyder Ali; and the united force surprised and destroyed after a desperate resistance an English brigade of native troops under Colonel Braithwaite. Meanwhile five obstinately contested naval engagements took place in the Bay of Bengal between Hughes and Suffren. Suffren, an

[1] Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power in History*, p. 428. Captain Mahan's description of the sea battles between Hughes and Suffren is of extraordinary interest to Englishmen, particularly because the author, though by no means a partizan of England, is stirred and warmed into reluctant admiration of the bulldog tenacity with which the English captains fought their ships.

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admirable naval tactician, might have beaten Hughes if he had not been ill supported by his captains. On the other side Hughes and all his men fought their ships with stubborn fierceness, until the superior seamanship and unconquerable endurance of the English sailors so far prevailed that the French fleet was prevented from affording any material assistance to the army on land. Early in 1783 Bussy arrived from France with a large reinforcement of French infantry. But the death of Hyder Ali in December 1782 had just relieved the English from their inveterate foe; and although his son and successor Tippu Sahib, acting with the French troops, reduced the English army before Cuddalore to a very awkward predicament, yet no effective blow had been struck when in July 1783 the news of peace between England and France arrived. Whereupon Suffren sailed for Europe, and Tippu of Mysore, finding himself alone, very reluctantly came to terms somewhat later. In the spring of 1785, when Warren Hastings resigned the Governor-Generalship, the war-time of nearly ten years had ended, and the English were at peace with all the native powers of India.

It will be observed that throughout the eighteenth century the main alternations of peace and war in India keep time with the successive ruptures and renewals of amity between France and England. So long as the French were our rivals in the country, the two Companies necessarily took the word of command, for peace or war, from their home governments. After this rivalry had ceased the French kept their coast settlements; but their navy could always threaten our Indian sea-board, and the safety of all our possessions in India depended entirely

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upon the result of the maritime wars between the two nations. The Anglo-Indian governments were therefore so keenly sensitive to any apprehension of war with France that the mere rumour of a French descent on the coast aroused them to warlike activity. A native ruler who might be detected in correspondence with the Isle of Bourbon was sure to be treated as a dangerous enemy, to be attacked and disabled with all possible speed. The consequence has been that each repeated demonstration of France against the English dominion in India has accelerated instead of retarding its expansion; excepting only the war that ended in 1783 with the Peace of Versailles. During the greater part of that stormy period the English were too heavily overmatched, too closely pressed in all parts of the world, to do more than hold their ground in India. In 1781 England, without an ally, and with great odds against her, was confronted by all the great naval powers of Europe, France, Spain, and Holland, and by the North American colonies. In Asia she was locked in a fierce struggle with the two most warlike and skilful Indian powers, both of whom were dealing with the French, who on their side had brought into play against England in India the same strategy that was proving eminently successful against her in America. We lost our American colonies not through the resistance on land, which might and would have been worn down, but through the pressure of our naval enemies upon our communications across the Atlantic. This was the weapon used against us in the east by Suffren, who had learnt from ourselves the lesson that in regions distant from Europe

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sea power meant the control of the issues upon the land[1]. The French made great exertions to stop our sea-roads to India, to drive our fleet off the Indian coasts, and to throw reinforcements into the camps of our Indian opponents; they captured the only good harbour that commands the Indian peninsula, Trincomalee in Ceylon, and in conjunction with Hyder Ali they might have taken Madras, if Suffren could have shaken off the English admiral's indomitable grip. It is no wonder that during such a struggle, and for some time afterwards, our territorial landmarks in India were stationary; since our resources in men and money barely sufficed to preserve Madras and Bombay from destruction. But the centre and heart of the English power lay in Bengal, which the war never reached at all, and which was governed by a man of rare talent and organizing capacity. No Anglo-Indian government of that time could carry on a campaign by war loans, as in Europe; the cost had to be provided out of revenue, or by requiring subsidies from allied native rulers; and it was Bengal that furnished not only the money and the men, but also the chief political direction and military leadership which surmounted the difficulties and repaired the calamities of the English in the western and southern Presidencies. And when at last the Marathas made peace, when Hyder Ali died, and Suffren, with all his courage and genius, could not master the English fleet in the Bay of Bengal, there could be no doubt that the war had proved the strength of the English position in India, had tested the firmness of its foundation. Although the tidings of

[1] Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power in History*, p. 425.

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peace reached India in 1783 just in time to release the English army in South India from considerable difficulties, and the French ships still outnumbered the English on the coast, yet Suffren, on receiving the despatches, said, 'God be praised for the peace! for it was clear that in India, though we had the means to impose the law, all would have been lost[1].'

With the termination of this war ended the only period, in the long contest between England and the native powers, during which our position in India was for a time seriously jeoparded. That the English dominion emerged from this prolonged struggle uninjured, though not unshaken, is a result due to the political intrepidity of Warren Hastings. It seems unnecessary to continue here the discussions, which have now lasted more than a century, over the career of this remarkable Englishman. What chiefly concerns us to understand is that Hastings carried the government of India safely through one of the sharpest crises in our national history, when our transmarine possessions were in great peril all over the world, because all the naval powers of Europe were banded against us. When, in the course of the Seven Years' War, our successes against the French in India and North America had freed England from her only powerful rival, it might have been supposed that we should remain in comparatively peaceful occupation. But so soon as foreign competition ceased, internal troubles began in both hemispheres; the colonists struck for independence in the West; the native powers combined to dispute our predominance in the East; and France, evicted

[1] Mahan, *Influence of Sea Power in History*, 464.

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and disappointed, naturally encouraged and aided both movements. In America the insurgents, after an arduous struggle, tore down the British flag; in India the end of a long and exhausting contest found our flag not only flying still, but planted more firmly than ever; nor had either the implacable hostility of Mysore, or the exhausting Maratha invasions, succeeded in wresting an acre of British territory from the grasp of Warren Hastings.

Hastings had no aristocratic connexions or parliamentary influence at a time when the great families and the House of Commons held immense power; he was surrounded by enemies in his own Council; and his immediate masters, the East India Company, gave him very fluctuating support. Fiercely opposed by his own colleagues, and very ill obeyed by the subordinate Presidencies, he had to maintain the Company's commercial establishments, and at the same time to find money for carrying on distant and impolitic wars in which he had been involved by blunders at Madras or Bombay. These funds he had been expected to provide out of current revenues, after buying and despatching the merchandise on which the Company's home dividends depended; for the resource of raising public loans, so freely used in England, was not available to him. He was thus inevitably driven to the financial transactions, at Benares and Lucknow, that were now so bitterly stigmatized as crimes by men who made no allowance for a perilous situation in a distant land, or for the weight of enormous national interests committed to the charge of the one man capable of sustaining them. When the storm had blown over in India, and he had piloted his vessel into

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calm water, he was sacrificed with little or no hesitation to party exigencies in England; the Ministry would have recalled him; they consented to his impeachment; they left him to be baited by the Opposition and to be ruined by the law's delay, by the incredible procrastination and the obsolete formalities of a seven years' trial before the House of Lords. Upon such a career, upon the value of the services rendered by Hastings to his country and the injustice with which he was requited, the English people must by this time have formed a judgment too broadly based to be much affected by any fresh scrutiny of the reckless calumnies flung at him while he stood at bay against false and vindictive accusers like Nuncomar and Francis, or fought at great odds against Hyder Ali and the Marátha league.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE INTERVAL BETWEEN HASTINGS AND CORNWALLIS (1785–1786).

SECTION I. *State of India*, 1785.

IT is an observation of Sir James Mackintosh that in the course of one generation the English lost one empire in the West and gained another in the East; and it may be added that we owe not only the loss but its compensation to the policy of the French Government. In the long war that had now ended their navy broke the hold of England on the North American colonies, as repeated blows on a man's arms make him let go his antagonist in a furious struggle. But they had so enfeebled themselves by their exertions to fight us on behalf of American independence that they were left powerless to interfere with us thenceforward in Asia, or to maintain their rivalry at sea. From 1783 begins a kind of pause in our Indian affairs, varied only in India by a preliminary trial of strength with Mysore; and in England by violent party-warfare over Indian questions. With France there is a truce that lasts ten years, until in the final decade of the eighteenth century a fresh and furious storm breaks over Europe with such violence that it rebounds upon India, and levels most of the remaining obstacles to the expansion of the English dominion in that country.

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If we are to measure the growth of the British power in India by the expansion of its territorial dominion, the interval of twenty years between Clive's acceptance of the Diwáni (1765) and the departure of Warren Hastings from India in 1785, may be reckoned as a stationary period. It is true that from Oudh we acquired Benares and Gházipur on the north-west of Bengal in 1775,—although the transfer merely registered our possession of two districts which had long been under our political control—and that we also obtained Bassein and Salsette, small though important points close to Bombay. But during the Governor-Generalship of Hastings we had been so far from extending our Indian domain, that our hold upon our actual possessions had been severely strained, our territory had been invaded, our arms had suffered some reverses, and the safety of one Presidency capital, Madras, had been gravely endangered. In point of fact the English ascendancy in India at this time had by no means been conclusively established; for although we were proving ourselves the strongest of the powers that were now definitely rising into prominence out of the confusion of the previous half-century, yet we were still confronted by jealous rivals, and our dominions were not large in proportion to those of other States.

Two things, nevertheless, had been made clear by the struggle that had been sustained by the English nation. It had been proved in the first place that the united naval forces of Europe could not drive the English from the sea, or wrest from her the command of the great routes across the ocean between Europe and Asia. Secondly, it had by this time become clear that so long as their

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transmarine communications with the mother country could be preserved, and so long as their invaluable possession of Bengal remained undisturbed, the English ran no risk of permanent or vital injury either from the Marathas or from Mysore. The position of these two formidable fighting powers in the centre and south of India did undoubtedly still operate as a check upon the English, and might indeed have placed us in some jeopardy, if any hostile State of heavy warlike calibre had become established about this time in upper India. This might easily have happened, for the wide and wealthy plains of the north-west had hitherto been always the seat, and the source, of the largest and strongest military rulerships. But it so chanced, by the good luck which has always attended us in India, that toward the end of the eighteenth century, when the Marathas and the Mysore dynasty were strong and threatening, beyond our north-western frontier we had little or nothing to fear. The ghost of the Moghul empire, sitting crowned among the ruins of its ancient splendour, still reigned over Delhi; and the shadow of that great name still so far overspread the surrounding districts as to prevent their absorption under a new dominion.

Yet the political vacuum created by the final subsidence of the Moghul empire, and the withdrawal of the Afghans, was already filling up in the Punjab, by the rapid rise and compact organisation of the Sikhs. Under this new Hindu federation, much more closely knit together by ties of race and common faith than the Marathas, the people became animated by a martial

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spirit and a fiery enthusiasm such as the Hindus had not hitherto displayed. The history of the Sikhs illustrates a phenomenon well known in Asia, where an insurrectionary movement is always particularly dangerous if it takes a religious complexion, and where fanaticism may endure and accumulate under a spiritual leader until it explodes in the world of politics with the force of dynamite. The martyrdom of their first prophet, and their persecution by the later Moghul emperors, had engendered in these hardy peasants a fierce hatred of Islam. They had been repressed and broken by the Afghan armies of Ahmed Shah; but as his grasp on the Punjab relaxed their combination became closer and more vigorous; until by 1785 the Sikhs had mastered the whole country between the Jhelum and the Sutlej rivers in the centre of the Punjab, were threatening the Mahomedan princes about Delhi, and had made pillaging excursions eastward across the Ganges into Rohilcund.

To the English in Bengal this revival of Hindu nationality in upper India was exceedingly serviceable and opportune. For, in the first place, their real danger, the only substantial obstacle to their rising ascendancy, lay always, then as now, in the possibility of some foreign invasion led by some great chief or captain at the head of the fighting tribes of Central Asia. But the Sikhs were making it impossible for any such army to penetrate into the heart of the Punjab, without encountering the obstinate resistance of men united to defend their faith and their fatherland, in a spirit very unfamiliar to the quiescence of ordinary Hinduism. So early as in 1767 they had been strong enough to disconcert the final

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enterprise of Ahmed Shah; and twenty years afterwards his successor, Zemán Shah, was obliged to retire from Lahore. This last abortive expedition closed the long series of irruptions by the Mahomedan conquerors, who had for seven hundred years swept down from the north upon the plains of India, and had founded dynasties which were only sustained by constant recruitment from their native countries beyond the mountains. Thenceforward the Sikhs were not only able to hold the line of the Indus river against fresh invaders; they also cut off the channels of supply between Central Asia and the Mahomedan powers to the south of the Sutlej, who were moreover kept in constant alarm by this actively aggressive Hindu community on their northern frontier. The effect was to maintain among the fighting powers in northern India an equilibrium that was of signal advantage to the English by preserving their north-west frontier unmolested during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a critical period when they were fully occupied with Mysore and the western Marathas. The barrier of Oudh set up by Hastings, although it had been sufficiently effective against the predatory Maratha hordes, would have been of little use for withstanding the much heavier metal of attacks from Central Asia. But the fierce enmity of the Sikhs kept out the foreign Mahomedan, and prevented the resuscitation of any fresh Islamite dynasty upon the ruins of the old empire at Delhi or Lahore. By the time that the Sikh power had become consolidated the English had met and overcome, in the first years of the nineteenth century, their southern rivals, and could then turn their forces

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northward without fear of any serious diversion on their flanks or rear.

The position of the Sikhs on both sides of the Sutlej was also useful at this period in setting bounds to the encroachments of the Marathas, who were now again pushing northward under Sindia. This ambitious and able chief was endeavouring to carve out for himself an independent principality in the upper provinces. He had attached himself to one of the parties that were contending for the possession of imperial authority at Delhi, and had rewarded himself by marching up with a large army in 1785 to obtain his own nomination as Vicegerent of the empire. The emperor's eldest son had applied to the English for assistance; and Hastings had been much tempted, just before he quitted India, by the project of sending an expedition to Delhi for the purpose of setting up the Great Moghul again on his feet, and of making English influence paramount at his capital. But the Company, though alarmed at this notable aggrandisement of the Marathas in a new quarter, could not yet venture to oppose Sindia's enterprise, or to undertake a revival of the moribund empire. So Hastings reluctantly abandoned his project as impracticable. Yet it was in fact only premature, for twenty years later the march to Delhi and the expulsion of the Marathas were actually accomplished under Lord Wellesley's orders. In the mean time Sindia, who after Hastings' departure occupied both Agra and Delhi, became so confident as to send to the English Government, in his Majesty's name, a requisition for tribute on account of their administration of the imperial province of Bengal.

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The year 1786, therefore, when Lord Cornwallis reached India, found the English still confronting the Marathas in the west and north-west, and Tippu Sultan, the Mysore ruler, in the south, but with no other rivals of importance in the political or military field against them.

SECTION II. *Indian Affairs before Parliament.*

We have seen how from the time when the European nations first acquired valuable interests in India, the course of events in India has been gradually drawn more and more within European influences. The weaker Asiatic States have felt the attraction of the larger and more active political bodies; wars in the West have kindled wars in the East, and the clash of arms has reverberated from one to the other continent. The outcome of the contest was, as has been said, that England now held undisputed supremacy, as against other European nations, in India. Then, as the connexion between the British nation and its great dependency grew to be closer, as the points of contact multiplied, and the value of her magnificent acquisition became known to England, our clearer recognition of national rights and duties brought Indian affairs within the current of domestic politics. Not only foreign wars, but the struggle of Parliamentary parties at home had lately affected India. The conclusion of peace in Europe and America (1783) had now given the English, after an interval of ten years, a second opportunity of looking into the condition and management of their distant possessions; the loss of the American colonies had sharpened their solicitude

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for the new dominion that had been gained in the East. There could now be no doubt that England had acquired a great Indian sovereignty; for although the wars and perpetual contests of the last seven years had for the time imperilled our position in the country, the general result was to prove its stability under severe pressure, and thus to confirm rather than impair our ascendancy. Warren Hastings, in reviewing the state of Bengal at the end of his Governor-Generalship, wrote that the late war had proved to all the leading States of India 'that their combined strength and politics, assisted by our great enemy the French, have not been able to destroy the solid fabric of the English power in the East, nor even to deprive it of any portion of its territories.'

It was this conviction that the Company were now masters in India, that they had grown too powerful for a trading association—so powerful, indeed, as to have become an anomaly under the British constitution and even a danger to it—that gave weight and momentum to Burke's assault upon the whole system. In his speech upon Fox's East India Bill, which was to transfer the Company's authority to Parliamentary Commissioners, he enlarges upon the extent of the Company's territory and the immense range of their arbitrary despotism. 'With very few, and those inconsiderable, intervals, the British dominion, either in the Company's name or in the names of princes absolutely dependent on the Company, extends from the mountains that separate India from Tartary (the Himalayas) to Cape Comorin, that is, one and twenty degrees of latitude . .

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If I were to take the whole aggregate of our possessions there, I should compare it, as the nearest parallel I could find, to the empire of Germany[1].' There is some exaggeration in this description, and the German parallel is substantially erroneous; nevertheless it is worth observing that more than a century ago, within twenty-five years after the battle of Plassey, the predominance of the Company throughout India was treated as a fact only too completely accomplished. Nor can it be doubted that Burke's survey of the situation was in the main correct; the weakness of all the native States had been ascertained; the ground-work of empire had already been firmly constructed. And subsequent events rapidly verified the judgment of Hastings that 'nothing but attention, protection, and forbearance,' an equal, vigorous, and fixed administration, and free play for its vast natural resources and advantages, was needed to secure the rise of India, under British ascendancy, to a high and permanent level of national prosperity.

For some years the constitution and conduct of the East India Company had been undergoing thorough investigation before Committees of the House of Commons, with the result that the need of many reforms, and the expediency of imposing more control on the management of our Indian possessions, had been agreed upon unanimously. The Reports of the Committees were submitted, and Resolutions proposed, in 1782, at a moment when the old political parties were breaking up and reconstituting themselves into new groups under fresh leaders, when the famous Coalition Ministry was in process of

[1] Speech on the East India Bill, December, 1783.

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formation, and when the bitter contentions between hostile factions were at their height. In these Resolutions the whole recent administration of the Company was severely condemned, the Directors were required to recall Warren Hastings; and it was further resolved that the powers given to the Governor-General and Council must be more distinctly ascertained. When the Coalition Ministry took office Fox introduced a Bill altering the whole of the Company's constitution, which was supported by Burke in a speech loaded with furious invective against Hastings and the Company, both of whom he charged with the most abominable tyranny and corruption. Against some of the Company's servants the true record of misdeeds and errors was sufficiently long; but Hastings was a man of the highest character and capacity, an incorruptible administrator who had done his country great and meritorious services. Yet his integrity was virulently aspersed, and all his public acts wantonly distorted, by the malignity or careless prejudice of partizans, among whom none had been exposed to similar trials of a man's courage or constancy, and only a very few would have resisted similar temptations.

In this manner the Report and Resolutions were used as fuel for the engines of party-warfare to drive the Bill through Parliament against some very solid opposition. Nevertheless the essential question before the Commons and the country was not so much whether the Company and their officers were guilty of crimes that were for the most part incredible, as whether the patronage of India should be the prize of politicians, who after furiously

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denouncing each other's measures and principles had made a very dishonourable coalition to obtain office. On this point the king with a majority of his people was against the Ministry that had been formed under the Duke of Portland by Lord North's association with Fox and Burke. It thus came to pass that the pitched battles of the memorable Parliamentary campaigns of 1783–84 were fought upon Indian ground; Fox and Burke were defeated and driven out of office; the East Indian Bill was rejected; the Coalition was upset by George III and by Pitt, who rose at once to the summit of ministerial power. In 1784 Pitt carried through Parliament his Act which vested full superintendence over all civil, military, and revenue affairs of the Company in six Commissioners appointed by the Crown. The chief government in India was placed in the hands of the Governor-General with three Councillors, whose authority over the minor Presidencies was complete on all matters of diplomacy, of peace and war, and of the application of the revenues; and by a subsequent Act of 1786 the Governor-General was empowered to act on his own responsibility in extraordinary cases, without the concurrence of his Council.

This system of double government, by the Company under the control of a minister directly responsible to Parliament, lasted until 1858, when the Crown assumed the sole and direct administration of India, a project that had been under the consideration of the elder Pitt a hundred years earlier. The immediate effect of Pitt's Act was a great and manifest improvement in the mechanics of Indian government, removing most of the

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ill-contrived checks and hindrances which had brought Hastings into collision with his Council and the subordinate governments, abolishing the defects that he had pointed out, and applying the remedies that he had proposed. All preceding Governors had been servants of the East India Company; and Hastings, the first and last of the Company's Governors-General, had been the scapegoat of an awkward and unmanageable governing apparatus, hampered by divided authority, and distracted by party feuds in Calcutta and in London. The position and powers of the chief executive authority in India were henceforward very differently constituted, and the increased force of the new machinery became very soon visible in the results.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF LORD CORNWALLIS (1786–1793).

SECTION I. *The new Governor-Generalship.*

BUT the essence of the new governing constitution conferred upon British India did not only lie in the vigour which it infused into the executive by placing power and responsibility upon a plain incontestable basis; it also strengthened the Governor-General immensely by bringing him into close political relations with the Ministry at home. Lord Cornwallis, the first of the new dynasty of Parliamentary Governors-General, went to India with a high reputation as a soldier and a diplomatist, sure of the support of the strongest Ministry that had ever governed England, and invested with well-defined supreme authority, military as well as civil, under a full statutory title. He was Governor-General over all three Presidencies, and he was also appointed Commander-in-Chief. Such a concentration of power in one man, his rank, his reputation, his intimacy with Pitt and Dundas, all combined to sweep away the obstacles that had blocked the path of Hastings, and for the first time to clothe the

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representative of England in India with the attributes of genuine rulership. In the exercise of these ample powers he was materially aided by the political situation in Europe and Asia. The unfortunate and misconducted wars of Lord North's government had ceased; they had been succeeded, in the East and in the West, by a period of peace for England; it was the interval of cloudy stillness before the explosion of the great revolutionary cyclone in Europe, which was not felt in India until 1793. Such a breathing time was well suited for carrying out in India wide internal reforms, for consolidating the British position by a stroke at our foremost and most intractable Indian antagonist in Mysore, and for inaugurating a scheme of peaceful alliances with the other native princes, which lasted with the fair weather, but collapsed as soon as the storm-wave of European commotions reached the shores of India.

In the year 1786, therefore, we find the English sovereignty openly established in India under a Governor-General invested with plenary authority by the representatives of the English nation. The transformation of the chief governorship of a chartered commercial company into a senatorial proconsulship was now virtually accomplished; and with the accession of Cornwallis there sets in a new era of accelerated advance. It was Hastings who first set in order the chaos of Bengal misrule, and who drew the ground-plan of regular systematic procedure in almost all departments of executive government. But the administration of Hastings had been constantly interrupted by quarrels at home and wars abroad. Henceforward internal

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organization goes on continuously; laws are passed, abuses are firmly repressed, and the settlement of the land revenue of Bengal is the administrative achievement by which the name of Lord Cornwallis is now chiefly remembered in India. In fixing for ever the land-tax of the districts then included within the regular jurisdiction of the Presidency, he followed the natural bent of a statesman familiar only with the property tenures of England, where a Parliament of landlords was just about to make their own land-tax unalterable, except by diminution. And although the measure has cut off the Indian treasury from all share in the increase of rents and the immense spread of cultivation —although it has prevented the equitable raising of the land revenue in proportion with the fall in value of the currency in which it is paid—yet it has undoubtedly maintained Bengal as the wealthiest province of the empire. From this time forward, also, political insecurity within British territory gradually gives way to a sense of stable and enduring dominion, and to that feeling of confidence in a government which is the mainspring of industry. While the people begin to adjust themselves at home to these novel conditions of western sovereignty, abroad the British frontier is rarely threatened and hardly ever crossed by a serious enemy. The British Government has now taken undisguised rank among the first-class powers of India. There is as yet, however, no formal assertion of superiority; the native States still make war and peace with us on equal terms; they receive special missions, negotiate alliances, and with their internal affairs we pretend to no concern.

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SECTION II. *First war with Tippu of Mysore* (1790–92).

When Lord Cornwallis assumed office, there was peace between the English and the native powers; although the Marathas had joined the Nizám of Hyderabad in an attack on Tippu of Mysore, whose fanaticism and arrogance had alarmed and alienated all his neighbours. In this attack Cornwallis refused to join, but he set about bringing his army up to a war-footing; and Tippu, who was clearsighted enough to foresee danger from the English, spared no pains on his side to strengthen himself against them. The Mysore ruler, who had witnessed the last appearance of the French, as his allies, on the coast, who still had access to the sea-board and was in touch with the French settlements, had by no means abandoned his father's policy of endeavouring to check the growth of English predominance by calling in the assistance of other European nations. But his ignorance of the real condition of European affairs led him to make plans that were entirely futile, and that only accelerated his own destruction. In 1787 Tippu sent to Constantinople an embassy which, though it effected nothing at all, obtained from the Sultan so ostentatious a reception that it probably encouraged the unfortunate ruler of Mysore in miscalculating his own power and the intrinsic value of such politic courtesies. In the same year his ambassadors were civilly welcomed at Paris by Louis XVI. These most unsubstantial diplomatic amenities seem to have deluded him into a very false reckoning of his situation; while they confirmed the English in their attitude of vigilant suspicion and in their determination to cut off

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such dangerous communications at the first opportunity.

In such an environment of reciprocal distrust the futility of attempting to arrest by Acts of Parliament the natural current of affairs in India, or to resist the converging pressure of circumstances, was soon demonstrated. It had been declared by Pitt's Act that as the pursuit of schemes of conquest was repugnant to the wish, to the honour, and the policy of the British nation, the Governor-General must not declare hostilities, or enter into any treaty for making war against a native State, or for guaranteeing it against an enemy, except for the defence of our territory or of our allies from imminent attack. But Cornwallis had scarcely landed when his protection against Tippu was claimed by the Nizám. There being no immediate menace of war, the Governor-General held himself precluded by the Act from according the Nizám a defensive alliance which might have checked Tippu's machinations. What he did, however, was to promise to furnish the Nizám, under an old treaty, with an auxiliary force whenever he should need it; an engagement which tended rather to promote than prevent hostilities, since Tippu not unreasonably treated it as a preliminary to some direct movement against himself.

All these jealousies and mutual preparations were evidently making for war between the British and the Mysore Sultan, who soon relieved Lord Cornwallis from all further doubt in regard to the Act's interpretation. In defiance of formal warnings he proceeded to make an utterly unjustifiable attack upon the Rája of Travancore,

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a State under English protection. Lord Cornwallis thereupon formed a league against him with the Marathas and the Nizám of Hyderabad; the allied armies marched into the Mysore country, overpowered Tippu and besieged him in his capital, and after a year's campaign compelled him to sign a treaty (1792) which crippled his resources and stripped him of half his territory, including the Malabar district along the western sea-coast. From that time forward he was constantly seeking ways and means of revenge; and he clung desperately to the vain hope of foreign alliances that might strengthen his hands against the English. He negotiated with the Marathas, with Zemán Shah the Afghan king, and with the French, who entertained his overtures and made a show of helping him up to a point just sufficient to annoy and irritate the English. The only serious consequence of Tippu's dealings with France was that when in 1793 the French revolution produced a violent rupture between the two nations in Europe, Mysore was soon left exposed to the full force of England's hostility.

Section III. *Maratha and Mysore complications.*

In the mean time the Maratha chief Mahdajee Sindia, on whom the Moghul emperor had been induced to confer the title of Vicegerent of the empire, who had made large conquests in the north, and had defeated his rival, Holkar, in a desperate fight, was becoming all-powerful in upper India. His political aim was to maintain his own independence of the Maratha confederation without dissolving it. And as he was sagacious enough to perceive that the English were fast rising to superiority in India,

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he had been exceedingly distrustful of any alliance with them for the purpose of aiding them to crush a rival, even though that rival should be the Mahomedan ruler of Mysore. Now that Tippu had been humbled it was becoming manifest that the Marathas were the only military power, from the Sutlej river to the sea, from which the English had any opposition to apprehend. They were masters of immense territory; and their leaders were at the head of numerous well-equipped armies, which easily overcame the weak incoherent resistance of the Rájput clans, and would have certainly routed with small difficulty the mercenary troops of the two principal Mahomedan States, Oudh and Hyderabad. But the natural tendency of the commanders of separate armies to turn their camps into separate capitals, and to carve independent domains for themselves out of the provinces they had occupied, inevitably created great mutual jealousy, and constantly embarrassed the common action of the confederation. Mahdajee Sindia, whose independence had been recognised in 1786, had since increased rapidly his possessions and his military armaments, and he was now in occupation of the country round Delhi with a large and well-appointed army. His policy was aiming at combinations against the English as against a foreign power which threatened the subjugation of all India. But his predominance alarmed the Maratha chiefs quite as much as the British Government, so that the Peshwa was in no haste to follow his lead or to fall in with his projects.

In 1794, however, Mahdajee Sindia died suddenly; a man of great ambition, political capacity, and talent for

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war, who had carried out on a larger scale than any other Indian prince the new system of raising disciplined battalions under European officers, supported by effective artillery. But it had been already seen and said by the more far-sighted leaders among the Marathas themselves that this system, which rendered them irresistible by all other native antagonists, by the loose feudatory militia of Rájputana, and by the raw levies of the Mahomedan princes, was more likely to harm than to help them whenever they should be matched against their only serious opponents. These men saw that it was an attempt to play the game of war by European methods, and to beat the English by their own weapons. The regular troops and the cannon hampered those rapid daring marches and manœuvres of light-armed cavalry—their dashing charges and dexterous retreats—which had for a hundred years won for the Marathas their victories over the unwieldy Moghul armies, and had on various occasions perplexed and discomfited the English commanders. In the days of Dupleix and Clive the employment of disciplined troops was equivalent to the introduction of a new military weapon of high efficacy, known to no one except the French and English; and unexpected superiority of this kind always secures a triumph, at first, to the side that possesses it. But the armament and tactics of civilized nations imply high proficiency in the art of war, abundant supply of costly material, and a strong reserve of well-trained officers; they cannot be hurriedly adopted by an Eastern chief whose people are totally unaccustomed to such inventions. All military history, up to the latest time, has shown

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that for a rough uncivilized people, destitute of experience and resources but strong in numbers, by far the best chance of successfully resisting a small well-trained force lies in irregular evasive warfare. The severest reverses suffered by disciplined English troops in America, Asia, and Africa—from Braddock's defeat on the Ohio to the recent disasters in Afghanistan and the Transvaal—have always been in fighting against active irregulars, who used their own arms and methods. Moreover, in proportion as the Marathas adopted the armament and tactics of European warfare, they lost the advantage that comes out of unanimity of national, religious, or tribal sentiment, out of the bond of a common country or tradition. The new system required professional soldiers, who must be enlisted wherever they could be found; and especially it needed foreign officers. In this manner the foreign or alien element grew rapidly until the later Maratha armies became principally a miscellaneous collection of mercenaries, with trained infantry and artillery commanded by adventurers of different races and countries.

From this time forward indeed, it is a marked characteristic of our battles with the Marathas, as afterwards with the Sikhs, that although they were always sharply contested and often gained at a heavy cost, yet the victories were decisive; the blows were crushing because they were delivered at close quarters upon compact and organized bodies of troops which, when they were once dispersed or destroyed, could not be replaced. And since all the Indian States and dynasties with whom we

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fought depended for their existence on success in war, an overthrow placed them entirely at our mercy. For in almost every case their territorial title was derived only from recent occupation, and their possession was cemented by little or no national sympathies; so that unless the conqueror thought fit to set up again the fallen ruler the people merely underwent a change of masters. The whole attempt of the native powers to imitate the military methods of Europe proved a delusion and a snare. It led them to suppose that they could put themselves on an equality with the English by a system that really placed them at a disadvantage, and to maintain, upon a false estimate of their strength, large military establishments under foreign officers, which it soon became the chief object of the English Government to disband or destroy. Nothing was easier for the English, with their command of money and war material, than to increase their own disciplined army in India up to whatever point might be necessary for maintaining superiority. Nothing, on the other hand, was more difficult than for an Indian prince to repair his losses of cannon and trained soldiers. Nor is it hard to understand how, in these conditions of military and political inequality, every successive campaign in India for the last hundred years has resulted in an increase of the English territory. In fact the whole country has thus passed gradually under the dominion of the government which excelled all the other leading States in the art of disciplined fighting, and whose stability did not in any event depend upon the life or luck of a single ruler or general or upon the issue of a single battle, because its resources were drawn

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from an immense reserve of civilized wealth and energy beyond the sea.

After his campaign against Mysore, the chief object of Lord Cornwallis had been to provide for the peace of South India by inducing the Marathas and the Nizám of Hyderabad to join him in a treaty guaranteeing against Tippu the territories that each of them possessed at the close of the war. To this proposition the Nizám agreed readily, being much afraid of the Marathas; but the Marathas declined it because they meditated plundering the Nizám. The two great Mahomedan States of Oudh and Hyderabad were remarkably weak in proportion to their territory and revenue; they carried little weight in the political balance; and the chief concern of the British Government was to prevent their premature dissolution. Oudh had by this time fallen entirely under the British protectorate; a system which while it upholds the native dynasty is necessarily incompatible with the independent sovereignty of the prince; for the military defence of the country is undertaken by the protecting power, and the ruler binds himself by a subsidiary treaty to defray the expenses of an army which he does not command. Moreover, no Asiatic dynasty can endure which does not produce a succession of able men, tried and selected by proof of individual capacity to rule. But the system of protectorates, which maintains hereditary right, and does not permit an incapable heir to be set aside by energetic usurpers, cannot fail to seat on the throne, sooner or later, a prince who has no natural right to be there. The decline of governing ability was already visible in Oudh, which was falling into internal confusion and financial straits.

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Security from internal revolt and foreign attack bred indolence and irresponsibility; mismanagement of the revenue increased the burden of the subsidy; and the maladministration that was partly the consequence of the protective system became a reason for continuing it. Similar symptoms showed themselves later in Hyderabad, when that State also passed under the British protectorate.

The history of these complicated transactions serves mainly to illustrate the extraordinary and ever-recurring difficulties which have beset the British Government in India, where the policy of neutrality and non-interference only ripened the seeds of eventual discord, compelling us at last to step in for the cure of evils that might have been prevented. No other considerable power in the country was interested in the preservation of order; the stronger preyed, as a matter of course, upon the weaker; and there was always the danger, almost the certainty, that any military chief which should succeed in trampling down his rivals would before long turn his accumulated force against British territory. We may remember that the British Islands had never been able to abstain from taking part in any great war, during the eighteenth century, among the neighbouring nations of the European Continent, where England owned no land except Gibraltar. There is little cause, then, for surprise that the English in India, with possessions scattered, isolated, remote from each other, intermixed with foreign territory, and exposed to easy attack on every side except from the sea—in a country where, as Arthur Wellesley said later, no such thing as a frontier really existed—were invariably, though often reluctantly, drawn into participa-

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tion with the quarrels and scrambling for dominion which in those days were continually upsetting the balance of power and the tranquillity of the country.

SECTION IV. *Close of the Cornwallis Administration* (1793).

Thus the acts and results of Lord Cornwallis' administration show how difficult it had become for the English to stand still, or to look on indifferently at the conflicts that broke out all round them in India. It had been a general charge in England against the Company's governors that they plunged into unjust or unnecessary wars, and were troubled by an insatiable appetite for their neighbours' provinces. But it was understood to be one unquestionable advantage of the régime inaugurated in 1786, that temperance, political self-denial, and the renunciation of all such ambitious enterprises would have been secured by placing the conduct of affairs under direct ministerial control. No Governor-General ever set out for India under more earnest injunctions to be moderate, and above all things pacific, than Lord Cornwallis; and these general orders were ratified by a specific Act of Parliament, framed with the express purpose of restraining warlike ardour or projects for the extension of dominion. Pitt's Act of 1784 was emphatic in this sense; and in 1793 another Act declared that—

'Forasmuch as to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and the policy of this nation, it shall not be lawful for the Governor-General in Council to declare war, or to enter into any treaty for making war, or for guaranteeing the possessions of any country princes or

states (except where hostilities against the British nation in India have been actually commenced or prepared), without express command and authority from the home government.'

Yet Lord Cornwallis, whose moderation and judgment have never been doubted, found himself obliged to prepare for hostilities almost immediately after his arrival at Calcutta; and he soon discovered that the restraining statutes operated to promote the very evils they were intended to prevent. Under their restrictions the English Governor-General was obliged to look on with tied hands at violent aggressions and dangerous combinations among the native States, and was held back from interposing until matters had reached a pitch at which the security of his own territory was actually and unmistakably threatened. The Mysore war, and a considerable extension of dominion, followed in spite of all injunctions and honest efforts to the contrary. Yet such was the confidence in the good intentions of Cornwallis that when he left India in 1793 there was a general impression in England that he had merely taken the necessary steps for inaugurating a pacific and stationary policy. Whereas in fact we were on the threshold of an era of wide-ranging hostilities and immense annexations.

Nothing indeed is more remarkable, as illustrating the persistence of the natural forces that propelled the onward movement of our dominion, than the fact that the immediate consequence of bringing India under direct Parliamentary control was to stimulate, not to slacken, the expansion of our territories. Mr. Spencer Walpole has declared in his History of England that every pro-

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minent statesman of the time disliked and forbade further additions to the Company's territories; and we have seen that frequent laws were passed to check the unfortunate propensity for fighting that was supposed to have marred the administration of the Company. Nevertheless it is historically certain that a period of unprecedented war and conquest began when the Crown superseded the Company in the supreme direction of Indian affairs. The beginning of our Indian wars on a large scale dates from 1789; and the period between 1786 and 1805, during which British India was ruled (with a brief interval) by the first two Parliamentary Governors-General, Cornwallis and Wellesley —by Governors-General, that is, who were appointed by Ministers responsible to Parliament, and for party reasons—that period comprises some of our longest wars and largest acquisitions by conquest or cession. It stands on record that the greatest development of our dominion (up to the time of Lord Dalhousie) coincides precisely with these two Governor-Generalships. The foundations of our Indian empire were marked out in haphazard piecework fashion by merchants, the cornerstone was laid in Bengal by Clive, and the earlier stages were consolidated by Hastings; but the lofty superstructure has been entirely raised by a distinguished line of Parliamentary proconsuls and generals.

The closer connexion of India with England, and the importance of the English stake in the country, had now brought our Asiatic dependency so much more within the current of European politics, that the rising

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tide of hostilities between France and England swept over it, and swept forward the course of events. In 1793 began our long war with revolutionary France, which soon affected the temper of English politics in Asia. Buonaparte was now marching towards military despotism in the spirit of an Asiatic conqueror, upsetting thrones and uprooting landmarks, overriding national traditions and hereditary rights, carving out new kingdoms by the edge of his sword, and laying out their boundaries as one might divide an estate into convenient farms or properties. His delight in this pastime attracted him instinctively towards Asia, where he saw that a genius for interminable war and autocratic administration would find illimitable scope in knocking down the old-fashioned rickety governments, and rebuilding them symmetrically at leisure. His inclinations tallied, moreover, with his interests, since he could combine a taste for Asiatic adventure with an ardent desire to strike a blow at the English somewhere on the land, as he could make nothing of them at sea. The project of an expedition against British India was constantly in his mind; but his first and last attempt at Asiatic conquest was the abortive occupation of Egypt and the march into Syria in 1798, with the declared object, among others, of 'hunting the English out of all their Eastern possessions and cutting the Isthmus of Suez.' The menace only served, as usual, to hasten English annexations in India. For on one side it accentuated the alarm and resentment with which the English were watching the intrigues of the French with the Marathas and the Sultan of Mysore, and the recruitment of French officers for the

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armies of those States. On the other side the rapidly increasing predominance of the English and the overtures of the French misled the native princes into venturing for their self-protection upon the very steps that helped to precipitate their downfall. Now that England had completely recognised the immense value of her Asiatic possessions, her traditional jealousy of interference by the only European nation that had repeatedly challenged her ascendancy in India naturally reached its acutest stage during a desperate war with France.

The last act of Lord Cornwallis before he left India, in 1793, had been to seize all the French settlements; and the English now treated any symptom of an understanding with France, or even of a leaning in that direction, as a dangerous spark to be at once extinguished. Sir John Shore (Lord Teignmouth), who held the Governor-Generalship *ad interim* until Lord Mornington arrived in 1798, was a very cautious and overprudent politician. Being averse, on principle, to extending our relations or responsibilities, he refused rather ungenerously to assist the Nizám when the Marathas attacked him, thereby estranging our principal ally and encouraging our principal rivals. When the Nizám, who was very anxious for our alliance, proposed a defensive treaty on the basis of mutual territorial guarantee the British Government drew back, not wishing to defend Hyderabad at the risk of offending the Marathas, who might retaliate by a league with Tippu. The consequences of this half-hearted attitude were serious; for the Marathas invaded the Hyderabad country, dispersed the Nizám's army, and enforced on him an ignominious surrender to very

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extortionate terms[1]. This triumph brought the Marathas a considerable increase of strength and reputation, while the Nizám was so deeply incensed at our desertion of him that he largely increased his trained battalions, and relied more than ever on the French officers who commanded them, and who fomented his alienation from the English. Yet as soon as the Nizám began to augment and reform his regular troops, under Raymond and other French officers, Sir John Shore at once interposed to prevent him.

What the Governor-General feared was a combination against him between Mysore and the Marathas; and what he hoped was that these two jealous and mutually suspicious powers would sooner or later fall to blows against each other. But in fighting times the pacific bystander's attitude rarely suits the interest or dignity of a neighbouring State. In the present instance it only stimulated the combative instincts of both our rivals, who soon became more aggressive and more formidable to ourselves. The impolicy of having abandoned the Nizám to the Marathas now began to appear; for the Marathas had gained great augmentation of wealth and predominance, and their audacity increased as their respect for the English diminished. Moreover, Tippu of Mysore, who nourished wild hopes of revenge and of recovering his losses in the late war, believed the Nizám's strength to have been so reduced that he might seize all the Hyderabad country if the English could be prevented from opposing him. And for the purpose of counteracting the English power he pursued his futile endeavours to negotiate foreign

[1] At Kurdla (1795).

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alliances. He pressed the Afghan Amír, Shah Zemán, to invade India; and in 1797 Shah Zemán did march through the Punjab and occupy Lahore, to the great alarm of the Anglo-Indian Government; for the whole of north India was stirred by his coming, the Mahomedans were preparing to join his standard, the Oudh ruler was totally incapable of making any effective resistance, and if the Afghan had pushed on to Delhi there would have been an outbreak of anarchy and perilous commotion. Such a formidable diversion would undoubtedly have drawn northward every available English regiment for the protection of the Bengal frontier; but in 1798 Shah Zemán was obliged to return hurriedly to guard his own western provinces from the Persians.

Meanwhile Tippu had sent a secret mission across the Indian Ocean to the Isle of France, proposing an offensive and defensive alliance with the French Republic, which the French governor eagerly accepted and gazetted officially. In 1799 Buonaparte addressed to him a letter, dated Headquarters, Cairo, saying: 'You have been already informed of my arrival on the shores of the Red Sea, with an innumerable and invincible army, full of the desire of releasing you from the iron yoke of the English,'—and asking Tippu to send him an agent. But the French were themselves soon cut off in Egypt; and as the rumours of foreign intervention by sea or land died away, the Mysore Sultan, abandoned to the hostility of the English whom he had seriously alarmed, soon underwent the certain fate of Oriental rulers who venture among the quarrels of European nations.

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CHAPTER XIV.

GOVERNOR-GENERALSHIP OF LORD WELLESLEY (1798–1805).

SECTION I. *Mysore* (1799).

LORD MORNINGTON, afterwards Marquis Wellesley, landed at Madras on his way to Calcutta in April 1798, on the same day when the ambassadors of Tippu disembarked at Mangalore on their return from the Isle of France, where the French governor had not only given them a public reception, but had also issued a proclamation inviting all good citizens to enrol themselves under the Mysore banner for a war to expel the English from India. The instructions which had followed the Governor-General unquestionably warranted him in treating these dealings with the French as an act of war on the part of Mysore. 'As a general principle,' wrote Henry Dundas[1] to him, 'I have no hesitation in stating that we are entitled under the circumstances of the present time to consider the admission of any French force into Tippu's army, be it greater or smaller, as direct hostility to us;' and within a few months after reaching Calcutta Lord Mornington

[1] President of the Board of Commissioners for Indian affairs.

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declared that the growth of a French party in the councils and armies of the native Indian powers was an alarming evil that demanded extirpation.

When, therefore, it became known that Tippu's embassy to the Isle of France had brought back not only an offensive and defensive alliance with the French, 'for the express purpose of expelling the British nation from India'—but also some French officers and recruits for the Mysore army, the Governor-General concluded that he had just ground of hostility. His warlike ardour was easily heated, and he was deterred from at once attacking Tippu only by finding himself unprepared. The finances showed a standing deficit, the Company's credit in the money-market had fallen very low, the Madras army was not fit for taking the field; and Lord Mornington was so far from relying on the co-operation of his allies, the Nizám and the Marathas, that he recognised the impossibility of calling them in. The fruits of the non-interference policy had now shown themselves in the weakness and disaffection of the Nizám, in the ominous preparations of Tippu, and in the spreading power of the Marathas. The six years of English neutrality—from 1792 to 1798—had been employed by the two last-mentioned States in augmenting their war-resources and extending their territory at the expense of weaker neighbours. The defeat and capitulation of the Nizám at Kurdla had reduced him 'from the condition of a great and leading power in Hindustan to that of a tributary to the Marathas;' the corps of 14,000 men under French officers was the only support of his authority. Mornington wrote that these

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trained battalions at Hyderabad were the main root of the Nizám's disaffection; he believed that if they were brought into the field against Tippu they would almost certainly march over to Tippu's side. At Poona, the Maratha capital, the influence of Doulut Rao Sindia was now complete; he also held in sovereignty large tracts in central India, and had extended his territorial annexations north-westward up to Delhi, outflanking Oudh and the English possessions in Bengal. He was, in short, the most considerable prince in central and northern India, where he maintained an ambiguous attitude, overawing both the Peshwa's government and the Nizám, and denouncing the impolicy of Marathas assisting the English to destroy Mysore. Also about this time Lord Mornington received a letter from the Afghan king, Zemán Shah, announcing his intention of invading Hindusthán, and demanding aid for the purpose of rescuing the Moghul emperor, Shah Álam, from the hands of the Marathas.

In these circumstances the Governor-General determined to temporize with Mysore by confining his first communication to a demand for satisfaction, while he employed himself in strengthening the Triple Alliance—as he very diplomatically termed our precarious relations with the courts of Hyderabad and Poona—in restoring his finances, and reinforcing the Madras army. His first step was to conclude with the Nizám a treaty for the disbandment of the French battalions at Hyderabad, which was then carried out with great skill and resolution; the Nizám receiving instead a force commanded by English officers, to be stationed permanently in his

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country. At Poona, however, where similar proposals were made, the Maratha government was much more distrustful of the British ascendancy and much less in need of British assistance. The Peshwa naturally found very little attraction in the suggestion of an arrangement which, under the name of a subsidiary alliance, manifestly placed the State that furnished the money into military subordination to the State that provided the men.

The Nizám and the Peshwa both consented, nevertheless, to join the league against Mysore; and the Mysore Sultan was required in reasonable terms to disarm and abandon his alliance with the French. As he ignored or evaded these demands, a combined army marched against him early in 1799. After some futile attempts to keep the field against his enemy, Tippu was driven into Seringapatam and besieged there until the fortress was taken by assault in May; when the Sultan's death (he was killed in a hand-to-hand medley at one of the gates) brought the short Mahomedan dynasty of Mysore to a violent end. Lord Mornington broke up the kingdom by allotting certain shares of territory to the English and their allies; reconstituting the remainder into a State under the old Hindu reigning family whom Hyder Ali had expelled, and by whom Mysore, after a long interval of sequestration, is well and quietly governed at the present day.

The success of these military and political exploits was largely due to the presence in this campaign of Colonel Arthur Wellesley, who now made his first appearance among scenes where he was destined to attain the most brilliant reputation as a soldier and a statesman. Although he held only subordinate military command, his

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clear and commanding intellect, his energy and skill in action, were displayed in the advice which he constantly gave to Lord Mornington, in his able reorganization of all the army departments, and in the rapidly decisive operations with which he terminated the war. The Governor-General was rewarded by the thanks voted to him in the House of Commons[1], 'for counteracting with equal promptitude and ability the dangerous intrigues and projects of the French, particularly by destroying their power and influence in the Dekhan;' whereby, said the Resolution, 'he has established on a basis of permanent security the tranquillity and prosperity of the British Empire in India.' The imperial note here sounded —probably for the first time in a public document— contrasts remarkably with the hesitating, almost apologetic tone in which our position and the growth of our responsibilities had been discussed in Parliament twenty years earlier.

It may be truly said that the stars in their courses fought against Tippu—a fierce, fanatic, and ignorant Mahomedan, who was nevertheless sufficiently endowed with some of the sterner qualities required for Asiatic rulership to have made himself a name among the Indian princes of his time. But he had no political ability of the higher sort; still less had he any touch of that instinct which has occasionally warned the ablest and strongest Asiatic chiefs to avoid collision with Europeans. He was swept away by a flood that was overwhelming far greater States than Mysore, that had taken its rise in a distant part of the world, out of events

[1] October, 1799.

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beyond his comprehension and totally beyond his control, and that was now running full in the channel which carried the English, by a natural determination of converging consequences, to supreme ascendancy in India. He had thrown in his lot with the French just at the moment when they were at bitter irreconcilable enmity with the English, and were actually proclaiming their intention of striking, if possible, at our Eastern possessions. He received the plainest warning that the English would wrest the sword out of any hand that showed the slightest intention of drawing it against them in such a quarrel; and he might have reflected that while his friends were far distant, the English, backed by the native powers whom he had alarmed, were close on his frontier. But he knew that submission to the English demands meant subordination to their power, disarmament, the loss of his independence, and reduction to the rank of a prince whose foreign relations and military establishments would be thenceforward regulated strictly by English policy; and his fierce intractable temper drove him into a hopeless struggle.

The same situation has since frequently recurred, though not with the same intensity; the same option has been offered to other States and rulers. And the present form and constitution of the British empire in India, with its vast provinces and numerous feudatories, represents historically the gradual incorporation under one dominion of States that have submitted and States that have been forcibly subdued. As the old Moghul empire had been built up by a very similar process of gradual conquest, so when that great edifice fell to pieces it was certain that

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the fragments would soon gravitate again toward the attraction of some central rulership, whose protection would be sought by all the weaker chiefships, and whose superiority the stronger rivals must inevitably be compelled, by fair means or forcible, to acknowledge. When the acquisition of Bengal had given the English power a focus and a firm centralization, this assimilating process began steadily with a slow movement against stiff obstacles, but by the end of the century it had acquired great impetus and velocity. For the English Viceroys were now supported by the direct strength and resolution of the nation in securing their Indian possessions; and the temper of those stormy times coloured all their proceedings. What in Hastings would have been reckoned an act of rank iniquity was in Lord Mornington (now Marquis Wellesley) no more than an energetic measure of public necessity. The views and policy of these two statesmen were essentially identical; but Hastings was striving painfully, with slender resources, on the defensive, while Wellesley, backed by a war ministry at home, boldly assumed the offensive on a magnificent scale of operations.

SECTION II. *The Subsidiary Treaties.*

The dissolution of Mysore set forward the British dominion by two important steps. It finally removed an inveterate enemy, whose position had for thirty years endangered our possessions in South India; it also gave us complete command over the sea-coast of the lower peninsula, and thus greatly diminished any risk of molestation by the French. The declared object of the

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Governor-General was now to establish the ascendancy of the English power over all other States in India, by a system of subsidiary treaties, so framed as 'to deprive them of the means of prosecuting any measure or of forming any confederacy hazardous to the security of the British Empire, and to enable us to preserve the tranquillity of India by exercising a general control over the restless spirit of ambition and violence which is characteristic of every Asiatic government[1].' This general control he desired to impose 'through the medium of alliances contracted with those States on the basis of the security and protection of their respective rights.' In plain words, Lord Wellesley, to whom restless ambition was in Asiatics a thing intolerable, had already resolved to extend the British Protectorate over all the rulerships with which the English Government then had any connexion, by insisting that each ruler should reduce his army, and should rely for external defence and internal security mainly upon the paramount military strength of the British sovereignty.

The system of subsidiary treaties is worth some brief explanation, for it has played a very important part in the expansion of our dominion. It has been seen that our participation in Indian wars began when the English lent a military contingent to assist some native potentate. The next stage came when we took the field on our own account, assisted usually by the levies of some prince who made common cause with us, and whose soldiery were undisciplined, untrustworthy, and very clumsily handled. The English commander often found

[1] Wellesley despatches.

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it necessary to look behind as well as before him on the field of battle; his allies showed unseasonable impartiality by holding aloof at critical moments and reappearing to plunder either side indiscriminately. What was needed was a body of men that could be relied upon for some kind of tactical precision and steadiness under fire; but for this purpose it was of little use even to place sepoys under European officers unless they could be regularly paid and taught to obey one master. So the system soon reached the stage when the native ally was required to supply not men but money, and the English undertook to raise, train, and pay a fixed number of troops on receiving a subsidy equivalent to their cost. The subsidiary treaties made in India differed, therefore, from those made by England with European States in this respect, that whereas Austria or Russia raised armies on funds provided by England, Oudh or Hyderabad provided funds on which the British Government raised armies. Large sums had been hitherto spent by the native princes in maintaining ill-managed and insubordinate bodies of troops, and in constant wars against each other; they might economise their revenues, be rid of a mutinous soldiery, and sit much more quietly at home, by entering into contracts with a skilful and solvent administration that would undertake all serious military business for a fixed subsidy.

But this subsidy was apt to be paid very irregularly; so the next stage was to revive the long-standing practice of Asiatic governments, the assignment of lands for the payment of troops. There were now in India (excluding the Punjab, with which we had as yet no dealings)

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but three States whose size or strength could give the English Government any concern. Two of these —the Mahomedan States of Oudh and Hyderabad— were in no condition to resist the proposals of Lord Wellesley, nor is it likely that either of them could have long maintained itself without British protection. The Nizám of Hyderabad had been very liberally treated in the partition of Mysore, and Tippu's destruction had relieved him of an inveterate foe. In 1800 he transferred to the British Government considerable districts in perpetuity, 'for the regular payment of the expenses of the augmented subsidiary force.' The Vizier of Oudh had been placed on the throne by British influence: his country was in confusion, his troops were mutinous, and his finances were disordered by the heavy strain of the English subsidy. Under the pressure of these perplexities he had offered to abdicate his throne, a proposal which was received with great indignation by the Governor-General, who in his treatment of our earliest ally showed little patience, forbearance, or generosity. Nevertheless it was really most necessary to set in order the affairs of Oudh, and the result of Lord Wellesley's somewhat dictatorial negotiations was that the Vizier ceded all his frontier provinces, including Rohilcund, to the Company. The revenue of the territory thus deprived was taken as an equivalent to the subsidy payable for troops. This arrangement finally superseded the barrier policy of Hastings, which had effectually served its purpose for thirty years. Instead of placing Oudh in charge of the districts exposed to attack from the Marathas and invaders from the north-west, Lord Wellesley now obtained by

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cession the whole belt of exterior territory; and Oudh was thenceforward enveloped by the English dominion. This most important augmentation of territory transferred to the British Government some of the richest and most populous districts in the heart of India, lying along the Ganges and its tributaries above Benares up to the foot of the Himalayan range. It consolidated our power on a broader foundation, brought a very large increase of revenue, and confronted us with the Maratha chief Sindia along the whole line of his possessions in upper India.

Section III. *The Marathas* (1802–1805).

The evacuation of Egypt by the French and the Peace of Amiens necessarily dislocated the mainspring of Lord Wellesley's martial activity. Hitherto he had been able to describe his policy as purely self-defensive and pacific, to explain that he was compelled to extend the dominion of England by the need of counteracting the design of France, and that he had insisted on reducing the armies of the native princes in order to preserve them against a nation who 'considered all the thrones of the world as the sport and prey of their boundless ambition and insatiable rapine[1].' But Mysore, Hyderabad, and Oudh had now been placed beyond danger of the French contagion; and Lord Wellesley was able to record that 'the only native powers of importance now remaining in India independent of British protection are the confederate

[1] See his letter (1799) to Tippu Sultan, who may possibly have thought that this description did not apply exclusively to the French.

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Maratha States.' It could only be through a perverse contrariety of spirit that, notwithstanding his solemn warnings against the machinations of France, the European power which the Marathas persisted in regarding with uneasiness was England. Their restless character, the advantages presented by their local position to the future intrigues of France, and the number of French officers in the service of Sindia, convinced the Governor-General that it was a matter of indispensable precaution to acquire an ascendancy in the councils of the Maratha empire, and to frame a system of political connexion that should preserve a powerful barrier against them. This barrier had now been erected by the subsidiary treaties with the Mahomedan States; and as the three leading Maratha chiefs—Sindia, Holkar, and the Rája of Nagpore—were contending among themselves in arms for supremacy, the time was opportune for interposing with an offer of protection to the nominal chief of their confederacy at Poona, where the government was threatened by three predatory armies, subsisting at large on the country. If the chiefs of these armies combined to upset the Peshwa they might seize command of the whole Maratha empire; and, what was still more important, their next step would probably be a combination against the English.

The Peshwa, Báji Rao, had hitherto evaded all overtures from the English for a subsidiary treaty; but there was bitter feud between him and Holkar, whose brother he had cruelly executed, and who was now marching upon his capital. When Sindia came to the Peshwa's assistance there was a great battle in which Holkar was

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nearly defeated, until he charged the enemy at the head of his cavalry with such desperate energy that the allied army was driven off the field with the loss of all their guns and baggage. The Peshwa fled to a fortress, whence he despatched a messenger to solicit help from the English; and soon afterward he took refuge in Bassein, close to Bombay, where he signed a treaty of general defensive alliance with the British Government, under which a strong subsidiary force, to be furnished by the English and paid by the Peshwa, was to be permanently stationed within his territory, and all his foreign relations were to be subordinated to the policy of England.

This treaty also accomplished another leading object of Lord Wellesley's policy, for by admitting the British Government to mediate in all the exorbitant claims that the Marathas were pressing against the Nizám, it placed the Hyderabad State definitely under the protection of the English, to whom in future all such demands were to be referred. No time was lost in acting upon this important engagement. The Peshwa was escorted back to Poona by a British force under General Arthur Wellesley; and it was signified to the contending Maratha chiefs that their central government had been taken under British protection.

Lord Wellesley's political system was now reaching its climax. His subsidiary troops were encamped at the capitals of the four great Indian powers, at Mysore, Hyderabad, Lucknow, and Poona; all disputes among these States were to be submitted to his arbitration; and the interference of all other European nations was

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to be rigidly excluded. Upon these pillars he was building up firmly the inevitable preponderance of a steady, civilized, orderly administration over the jarring, incoherent rulerships by which it was surrounded. But it was not to be expected that the Treaty of Bassein would be otherwise than unpalatable to the Maratha chiefs, who saw that a blow had been struck at the root of their confederacy, and that the establishment of paramount British influence at Poona was a sure step toward the subversion of their own independence. The maintenance of the head of the Maratha empire in a condition of dependent relation to the British Government would naturally, in the course of time, tend to reduce the other Maratha powers into a similar condition of subordination, which was precisely what they feared and were determined to resist. They withheld acknowledgment of the treaty, questioned the Peshwa's right to conclude it without their consent, suspended their internal feuds, and seemed inclined to combine against the common danger.

The Maratha chief of Nagpore (commonly called the Rája of Berar), who had great influence over all the other leaders, succeeded in organizing a league against the British; but Holkar, although he agreed to a truce with Sindia, refused to join, and the Guikwar of Baroda kept apart. Sindia, however, effected his meeting with the Nagpore Rája, when both chiefs evaded the demand of the British envoy for a direct explanation of their intentions, and marched up to the frontier of Hyderabad. It was in the interest of the Marathas to gain time, for they hoped

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that Holkar might be persuaded to enter the league; it was for the same reason important to the British that the two chiefs should be forced to decide speedily between peace or war. The Governor-General was now again in his element, for in Europe a renewal of the French war was evidently at hand; the English Ministers had warned him that a French squadron was preparing at Brest for the East Indies, they had authorized him to retain possession of the French settlements that were to be restored under the Amiens Treaty, and they had desired him to keep his forces on a war-footing. At the same time some observations, which appeared to the Governor-General particularly inopportune, were conveyed to him upon the increase of his military expenditure and the diversion of the Company's trade.

Lord Wellesley, who had offered to resign, requested the Ministers to 'consider the alarm and anger of the Court of Directors on this latter subject with the indulgence which true wisdom extends to the infirmities of prejudice, ignorance, and passion;' while he prepared with alacrity to attack the Maratha confederates simultaneously in various quarters, and to open the impending war on the largest possible scale. The rupture with France intensified, as usual, his sense of the emergent necessity of bringing all the military powers of India under our supreme control. For although there was little real danger, as Arthur Wellesley pointed out, of the French being able to join forces with the Marathas —since their troops, even if they could land, would be destitute of equipments, and would be cut off from their

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base of supply—yet undoubtedly a great European war must always add risks to our position in India. Lord Wellesley also saw clearly enough that the security of the dominion that he was establishing on land depended essentially upon our maintaining a commanding superiority at sea. He urged upon the Ministry at home that so long as the Cape of Good Hope and the Mauritius were in French hands (for the Dutch were entirely under French influence) the coasts of India could be molested, or our enemies inland might be encouraged by expectations of aid from France. He spared, in short, no pains or preparations that might enable him so to use this opportunity of renewed hostilities in Asia and Europe as to accomplish 'the complete consolidation of the British Empire in India and the future tranquillity of Hindusthan.' Whatever may be thought of the methods occasionally used by Lord Wellesley to compass these ends, it is impossible to withhold our admiration from a conception so large, from so clear and far-ranging a survey of the political horizon.

With these views and intentions the Governor-General issued his orders to General Wellesley, who was facing Sindia in western India, and to General Lake, who was moving upon Sindia's possessions in the north-west. The main objective was to be either the entire reduction of Sindia's power, or a peace that should transfer to the British Government so much of his territory as should be sufficient to isolate him in central India, to cut him off from the western sea-coast, to expel him from Delhi (where he was still Vicegerent of the Empire), and to throw him back into central India by interpos-

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ing a barrier between his provinces in that region and in the north country. At Delhi Monsieur Perron, one of Sindia's ablest French officers, commanded a large body of regular troops, with which he held the fortress, kept the Emperor Shah Álam in custody, and exercised authority in his name. This force—consisting of about 40,000 men with a large train of artillery, well officered by Frenchmen—it was one of Lord Wellesley's principal objects to disband; and his anxiety to cross swords with Sindia was intensified by his knowledge of constant intrigues and correspondence between the Marathas and the French.

Under the leadership of the two very able generals who led the English armies, and who were also invested with full diplomatic authority, the war which now began was brilliantly successful, and its objects were completely fulfilled. In July 1803 General Wellesley signified to Sindia and the Nagpore Rája that they must withdraw their army from its station upon the Nizám's frontier, or abide his attack. They replied by desiring him first to retire; but as this would have exposed the territory which their movements were threatening, the English army advanced, and war was formally declared. The scene of the campaign that followed was in that part of central India where the northern frontiers of the Hyderabad State adjoined the possessions of the two Maratha chiefs. At Assaye, where the collision took place, Sindia's troops fought well and fiercely; the veteran battalions of De Boigne made a resolute stand, the artillery inflicted heavy loss on the English infantry and died, stubbornly fighting, at their guns; but Wellesley's

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victory was decisive. Marching onward into Berar, he inflicted a severe defeat upon the troops of the Nagpore Rája at Argaon; he then took by storm the hill fort of Gawilghur; and before the year's end peace had been concluded with both the Maratha belligerents on terms dictated by the British commander.

General Lake's successes in the north-west were of equal importance. He took Aligarh by assault, dispersed Sindia's force before Delhi, occupied the town, and assumed charge of the Emperor's person; Agra was besieged and captured; and finally the British force met at Laswaree seventeen battalions of trained infantry with excellent artillery, the last of Sindia's regular army. These troops behaved so gallantly that the event (Lake wrote) would have been extremely doubtful if they had been still commanded by their French officers; but Perron and the Frenchmen had left the Maratha service. Nevertheless their vigorous resistance proved the high military spirit which the soldier of northern India has so often displayed; they held their ground until all their guns were lost, and finally suffered a most honourable defeat[1].

The result of these well-contested and hardly won victories was to shatter the whole military organization upon which Sindia's predominance had been built up, to break down his connexion with the Moghul court in the north, and to destroy his influence at Poona as the most formidable member of the Maratha confederacy. Both Sindia and the Nagpore Rája, finding themselves in

[1] Assaye, September, 1803: Argaon and Laswaree, November, 1803.

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imminent danger of losing all their possessions, acquiesced reluctantly in the terms that were dictated to them after the destruction of their armies. The Treaty of Bassein was formally recognised; they entered into defensive treaties and made large cessions of territory; Sindia gave up to the British all his northern districts lying along both sides of the Jumna river; he ceded his seaports and his conquests on the west coast; he made over to them the city of Delhi and the custody of the Moghul Emperor; he dismissed all his French officers and accepted the establishment, at his cost, of a large British force to be stationed near his frontier. The Rája of Nagpore restored Berar to the Nizám, and surrendered to the British Government the province of Cuttack, on the Bay of Bengal, which lay interposed between the upper districts of Madras and the south-western districts of Bengal.

But Jeswant Rao Holkar, who had held aloof from the war in the hope of profiting by the discomfiture of Sindia, his rival and enemy, had been living at free quarters with a large Maratha horde in Rájputana. As he now showed some intention of taking advantage of Sindia's defenceless condition, he was summoned by Lord Lake to retire within his own country, and on his refusal was attacked by the British troops. Holkar, who had always adhered to the traditional Maratha tactics of rapid cavalry movements, systematic pillaging, and sudden harassing incursions, proved a very active and troublesome enemy. Having drawn Colonel Monson far from his supports by a simulated retreat, Holkar then turned on him suddenly and destroyed nearly all his force; he

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fought a severe action against the British troops at Deig[1]; and his ally, the Bhurtpore Rája, compelled the English general to retire from the siege of Bhurtpore. But Lake's flying columns pursued Holkar with indefatigable rapidity until his bands were surprised and at last dispersed, when he himself took refuge in the Punjab. He returned only to sign a treaty on terms similar to those on which peace had been made with the other belligerents.

SECTION IV. *Review of Lord Wellesley's Policy.*

The result of these operations was to establish beyond the possibility of future opposition the political and military superiority of the English throughout India. The campaigns of Wellesley and Lake dissolved the last of the trained armies which had been set on foot, in imitation of the European system, during the past twenty years by the native princes of India; and the weapon upon which the Marathas had been relying for resistance in the field was thus broken in their hands. In the place of the numerous battalions, many thousands strong, that had been maintained under foreign officers by the foremost Mahomedan and Maratha States, Lord Wellesley's subsidiary treaties had now substituted several divisions, amounting in all to 22,000 men, cantoned within the jurisdictions or on the borders of these very native States, and paid from their revenues. The employment of foreign officers, unless by permission, was

[1] November, 1804.

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thenceforward prohibited; while the effect of the treaties was to interdict any hostilities between State and State—since all disputes must be referred to British arbitration—to fix down their rulers within the territorial limits authorized by the supreme Government, to prevent their future combination for any purpose injurious to British interests, and to block up finally all avenues of communication between these States and any foreign power.

Up to this time the acquisitions of the Maratha chiefs in central India, which had been wrested bit by bit from different owners at various times, had been so intermixed with the lands of the Nizám, of the Peshwa, and of the Rájput princes, as to produce an entanglement of territorial and revenue rights that furnished, as it was intended to furnish, ample pretexts for further quarrel and encroachment. Lord Wellesley's policy was, in the first place, to rearrange the political map in this part of India so as to circumscribe each Maratha chiefship within distinct boundaries. His secondary objects were to interrupt the chain of their confederate possessions by interposing the lands of some non-Maratha State, and to raise a barrier between Maratha and British territory in northern India by maintaining under British guarantee the independence of the petty States along our frontier. Lastly, he desired so to rearrange the map of southern India as to link up our own important possessions in Madras with the central dominion in Bengal. This work of consolidation and connexion was pushed still further by Lord Hastings twelve years later, and was finally consummated by Lord Dalhousie; but Lord Wellesley's settlement laid out the territorial distribution of all India (excepting the Punjab

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and Sinde) on the general plan which was followed for the next forty years, and which survives in its main outlines to this day. By occupying the imperial cities of Agra and Delhi, with the contiguous tracts on both sides of the Jumna, and by annexing the whole country between the Ganges and the Jumna rivers, he carried forward British territory from Bengal north-westward to the mountains, with a frontier resting on the upper course of the Jumna. By his acquisition of the Cuttack province he secured the continuity of British territory south-eastward along the sea-coast, joined the two Presidencies of Bengal and Madras, and established sure communication between them. Our dominions were thus prolonged in a broad unbroken belt from the Himalayas downward to the Bay of Bengal and the southernmost district of Madras; while the cessions obtained on the west coast went far toward completing our command of the whole Indian littoral.

Above all, when Lord Wellesley expelled the Marathas from Delhi, and assumed charge of the person and family of the Moghul Emperor, he inaugurated a significant change of policy. For at least forty years the imperial sign manual had been at the disposal of any adventurer or usurper who could occupy the capital, overawe the powerless court, and dictate his own investiture with some lofty office or with a grant of the provinces that he had appropriated. At an earlier period the European trading companies, English and French, had been careful to obtain title deeds from the Great Moghul. It was known that when Pondicherry was restored to the French at the Peace of Amiens, Buonaparte used the

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opportunity to send out to the French settlements in India a considerable military staff, whose mission was to communicate with the Emperor of Delhi through the French officers in Sindia's service. And it was part of a wild project submitted to Buonaparte in 1803, that an expedition should be sent overland to India with the ostensible mission of rescuing the imperial house from its enemies and oppressors. Lord Wellesley was at any rate quite satisfied that he was threatened by 'the aggrandisement of the French power in India to a degree that compelled him to lose no time in placing the person, family, and nominal authority of His Majesty Shah Álam under the protection of the British Government.' He formally renounced any intention of using the royal prerogative as a pretext for asserting English claims to ascendancy over feudatories or to the exercise of rulership. With the avowed object of abolishing a titular sovereignty that hardly retained the shadow of its former substance, whose representative had been rescued by our arms from a state of extreme degradation and distress, he relegated Shah Álam to the position of a State pensioner, with royal rank and an ample income assured to him. The arrangement lasted fifty years, until it was suddenly extinguished in 1857, when the storm raised by the Sepoy Mutiny swept away the last relics of the Moghul throne and dynasty.

The political outcome of Lord Wellesley's Governor-Generalship is well summarized in the final paragraph of the long despatch [1] in which he reported to the Court of

[1] July, 1804.

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Directors, in the lofty language of a triumphant proconsul, the general result of the wars and treaties that he had made for the consolidation of our Eastern empire and the pacification of all India.

'A general bond of connection is now established between the British Government and the principal states of India, on principles which render it the interest of every state to maintain its alliance with the British Government, which preclude the inordinate aggrandizement of any one of those states by an usurpation of the rights and possessions of others, and which secure to every state the unmolested exercise of its separate authority within the limits of its established dominion, under the general protection of the British power.'

It is indeed from this period, and from the great augmentations of territory obtained by Lord Wellesley's high-handed and clear-headed policy, that we may date the substantial formation of the three Indian Presidencies. Up to 1792 the Madras Presidency administered in full jurisdiction no more than a few districts on the coast. But between 1799 and 1804 the partition of Mysore, the lapse of Tanjore, the cessions from Hyderabad, the transfer of the whole Carnatic to the Company, brought large and fertile tracts within the administrative circle of Madras, and constituted it the headquarters of a large government in south India, which has received no very important subsequent accretions. In western India the Bombay Presidency, which had hitherto been almost entirely confined to the sea-board, and whose principal importance had been derived from its harbour and trading mart, now acquired valuable districts in Guzerat; and the influence of its government rose to undisputed

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predominance throughout the adjoining native States, especially at the Maratha capitals of Poona and Baroda. In North India the Marathas had lost all power; the important province of Bundelcund, containing a number of minor chiefships, had been brought entirely under British influence and partly under British rule; the ceded and conquered districts obtained from Oudh and from Sindia were settling down under our regular administration. The Presidency at Calcutta, which now extended, as has been said, from the Bay of Bengal north-westward to the Himalayas and the Punjab frontier, became henceforward the centre and the chief controlling power of a vast dominion, directly ruling over the richest and most populous region of India, indirectly imposing its presence over every other State or group of chiefships south of the Sutlej river, drawing them all within its orbit, and enveloping them all within the external bounds of its sovereignty. The only Indian rulerships completely outside the sphere of this paramount influence were those which occupied the Punjab, (where the Sikh power was now drawing to a head), the country along the Indus river, and the mountains of Nepal.

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CHAPTER XV.

THE STATIONARY PERIOD.

SECTION I. *Reaction within India.*

BUT Lord Wellesley's career of military triumphs and magnificent annexations had alarmed the Court of Directors, who protested against the increase of debt and demurred to the increase of dominion. Their opposition was treated with contempt by the Governor-General until he discovered that even the Ministers found reason to apprehend that he was going too fast and too far, that Lord Castlereagh was remonstrating, and that the nation at large was startled by his grandiose reports of Indian wars, conquests, and prodigious accessions of territory. Toward the close of his term of office his measures became much more moderate. The avowed object of Lord Wellesley had been to enforce peace throughout India, and to provide for the permanent security of the British possessions by imposing upon every native State the authoritative superiority of the British Government, binding them down forcibly or through friendly engagements to subordinate relations with a paramount power, and effectively forestalling any future attempts to challenge our exercise of arbitration or control. In short,

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whereas up to his time the British Government had usually dealt with all States in India upon a footing of at least nominal political equality, Lord Wellesley revived and proclaimed the imperial principle of political supremacy. All his views and measures pointed towards the reconstruction of another empire in India, which he rightly believed to be the natural outcome of our position in the country, and the only guarantee of its lasting consolidation.

In 1805 the return of Lord Cornwallis to India brought about a change of policy which checked and altered the whole movement; for although his second Governor-Generalship was very short he had time to lay down the pacific principles that were acted upon by his successors. When Lord Cornwallis reached Calcutta, he found an empty treasury, an increasing debt, the export trade of the Company arrested by the demand of specie for the military chest, and the British ascendancy openly proclaimed and in process of enforcement by ways and means that evidently involved us in a rapidly expanding circle of fresh political liabilities. His own ideas, and the instructions that he had brought out, pointed in a contrary direction. He thought that the subsidiary treaties only entangled us in responsibility for defending and laboriously propping up impotent or unruly princes, impairing their independence and retarding the natural development of stronger organizations. Nor did our interest seem to him to require that we should undertake the preservation of the smaller chiefships adjacent to our frontiers from absorption by the larger predatory States. It seems, on the contrary, to have been his view

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that our protectorate should not extend beyond the actual limits of our possessions—a rule of political fortification that has never been practised in India. We have always found it necessary to throw forward a kind of glacis in advance of our administrative border-line, so as to interpose a belt of protected States or tribes between British territory proper and the country of some turbulent or powerful neighbours.

Lord Cornwallis died within three months after his arrival, before he could do more than indicate this change of policy. But his views—which represented the reaction in England against Lord Wellesley's costly and masterful operations—so far prevailed, that for the next ten years following his decease the experiment of isolation was fairly tried by the British Government in India. Sir George Barlow, whom the death of Cornwallis made for a time Governor-General, laid down the principle that a certain extent of dominion, local power, and revenue, would be cheaply sacrificed for tranquillity and security within a contracted circle; and he withdrew from every kind of relation with the native States to which we were not specifically pledged by treaty. It will be found that whenever the Governor-Generalship has been held by an Anglo-Indian official, annexations have been exceedingly rare and the expanding movement has slackened; but Sir George Barlow even took a step backward. The subsidiary alliance with Sindia, projected by Lord Wellesley, was abandoned; the minor principalities adjacent to or intermixed with the Maratha possessions were left to their fate; the English proclaimed an intention of living apart from broils, of dissociating themselves from

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the general concerns of India at large, and of improving their own property without taking part in the quarrels or grievances of their neighbours. If, indeed, Sir George Barlow had adopted to their full extent the views that were at this period pressed upon him by the authorities in England, he would have disconnected the British Government from the subsidiary treaties which invested us with paramount influence in the affairs of the two great Maratha and Mahomedan States, ruled by the Peshwa at Poona and by the Nizám at Hyderabad. But the result would have been to undo the work of Lord Wellesley—to abdicate the ascendancy that we had attained and to throw open again the field of central India to the Marathas, who would at once have re-occupied all the ground that we should have abandoned. It was, indeed, so manifest to those actually watching the situation in India, that the consequence would be a reversion to political confusion—would discredit our public faith, and encourage our enemies—that the Governor-General insisted on maintaining the treaties, and even found himself obliged, against the general logical tenor of his principles, to interpose vigorously in support of British diplomatic authority at Hyderabad.

Section II. *Rumours of Foreign Invasion.*

In the meanwhile, although the French had at last been effectively barred out from approaching India by sea, and although every native State accessible to hostile intrigues by the sea-coast had been bound over under heavy recognisances to the English alliance, yet the

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signs and warnings of danger now began to reappear in a different quarter of the stormy political horizon.

The Persian king, who had suffered heavily from a war with Russia in 1804–5, appealed for succour to Napoleon in Europe, and also sent a similar application to Calcutta. From India, where the policy of retrenchment and retractation at that moment prevailed, no encouragement was forthcoming. The French, however, who were just then in the midst of a desperate war with Russia, readily responded to the advances of Persia by sending an embassy for the discussion of alliances, and of some ulterior objects in which England found herself much interested. Napoleon saw in these Persian overtures the opportunity of resuscitating his favourite schemes of Asiatic conquest, and the elements of a far-reaching political combination. His envoy to Teheran, General Gardane, was instructed that his chief aim should be to form a triple alliance between France, Turkey, and Persia for the purpose of opening out a road to India. He was also directed to ascertain what co-operation might be expected within the country, particularly from the Marathas, if India could be reached by a French army.

Then came, in 1807, the battle of Friedland, when Napoleon used his victory to convert the Russian Emperor from an enemy into an ally of France, and to organize with Alexander I a fresh and much more formidable confederation against the English in India. Russia was already an Asiatic power, with a distinct inclination and momentum eastward. It is therefore no wonder that this ominous conjunction of France, at that

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moment supreme in western Europe, with the only European State that could further her designs upon India, should have roused and substantiated the alarms of an invasion by land; alarms that have never since ceased to recur periodically, gaining strength in proportion as their fulfilment has become by degrees less manifestly impracticable. The inevitable effect of this chronic disquietude has been, from the beginning, to fix the attention of the Anglo-Indian Governments more and more, in the course of the present century, upon the north-west angle of India. And the concentration of our whole foreign policy upon that point has undoubtedly accelerated the expansion of our dominion in that direction, because in our anxiety about the only vulnerable side of our land frontier we have naturally pushed forward to secure it. No sooner, in fact, had the spectre of French troopships hovering about our sea-coast been finally laid under the waters of Trafalgar, than the apparition of European armies marching from the Caspian to the Oxus began to trouble the prophetic imagination of English statesmen.

From the day when the Emperors of France and Russia exchanged pledges of unchangeable personal friendship at Tilsit, Napoleon incessantly pressed upon Alexander his grand scheme of a joint expedition through Turkey and Persia against the English in India, with the object of subverting their dominion and destroying the sources of their commercial prosperity. In 1807 the pre-eminence of France on the European Continent had reached its climax. Napoleon had defeated every army that had successively met him in the field; he had

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dissolved every league that had been made against him; and he had forced every leading State to join in a coalition for the rigid exclusion of English commerce from all their seaports. When, however, it became clear that these roundabout methods of attacking England were futile, and that nothing short of a direct home-thrust would disable his indefatigable enemy, the French Emperor naturally turned his eyes toward the only important English possession whose frontier was not absolutely inaccessible to invasion from Europe by land. His imagination was fired by the recollection that Asia had more than once been traversed by conquering armies. That Napoleon should have seriously contemplated marching across Europe and half Asia to invade the territory of an island within twenty miles of the French coast—that he should have thought it on the whole less impracticable to send a force from the Danube or Constantinople to Delhi than to transport his troops from Calais to Dover—is certainly a remarkable illustration of the impregnability of effective naval defence. But his proposals obtained very half-hearted encouragement from the Russians, who had some useful acquaintance with the difficulties of Asiatic campaigning, and a wholesome distrust of the associate in whose company they were invited to set out. They were by no means eager to embark on distant eastern adventures, or to lock up their troops in the heart of Asia, upon the advice and for the advantage of the restless and powerful autocrat whose armies still hovered about their western frontier. They stipulated for a partition of the Turkish Empire as a preliminary dividend upon the joint-stock enterprise,

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and as a strategic base for any further advance eastward. To this condition, however, Napoleon refused his assent, alleging reasonably enough that it would be playing into the hands of England, since if the Russians were to take Constantinople the English would at once retaliate by seizing Egypt[1]. An imposing French mission was nevertheless sent to Persia, and the Anglo-Indian Governments were much startled by the activity of the French agents at Teheran and other Asiatic courts.

Section III. *Extension of foreign relations.*

It is from this period that we must date the embarcation of Anglo-Indian diplomacy upon a much wider sphere of action than heretofore. The English ministers soon discovered Napoleon's plan of an Asiatic campaign, and all his secret negotiations were thoroughly known to them. For the purpose of counteracting the French demonstrations, and of throwing up barrier after barrier against the threatened expedition from the Black Sea and the Caspian, the Indian Governor-General, Lord Minto, sent missions to all the rulers of States on and beyond his north-western border—to Ranjít Singh at Lahore, to the Afghan Amír, to Sinde, and to the Shah of Persia, who was just then completely overawed by the combined preponderance of France and Russia. At Teheran a treaty was settled, after much dispute and various misunderstandings (for the English envoy from Calcutta was superseded by another envoy from London),

[1] The whole correspondence, recently published, is worth careful study, seeing that diplomatic situations and national *rapprochements* have a certain tendency to recur.

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engaging England to subsidise Persia in the event of unprovoked aggression upon her. At Peshawar the envoy to Afghanistan (Mountstuart Elphinstone) found the whole country distracted by civil war. The Afghan king, Shah Soojah, was barely holding on to the skirts of his kingdom; the Duráni monarchy, attacked on the west by Persia and pushed hard on the east by the Sikhs, was already breaking up again into separate chiefships. Elphinstone's negotiations were cut short by the defeat of Shah Soojah, who fled into exile, to be restored thirty years later by an ill-fated expedition that eventually cost the English an army and the king his life.

But all these schemes for establishing close alliances and barrier treaties with Persia, Afghanistan, and Sinde were dropped or postponed so soon as the Spanish insurrection of 1808, and the growing estrangement between France and Russia, had provided Napoleon with such ample occupation in Europe that he abandoned his schemes of Asiatic adventure. And the apprehensions of invasion died away soon afterward, for the long war that ended with Napoleon's overthrow left us in undisturbed possession of India. The sea-roads were guarded by an irresistible navy; the total collapse of the French empire, the exhaustion of all the great European States, the manifest decay and immobility that were spreading through Central Asia—all these circumstances united to secure us twenty[1] years of quiet freedom from even the rumour of molestation by land. The only direct result of all the missions sent from India was the ratification

[1] 1808–1828. Russia made a long stride eastward in 1828, after her Persian war. This revived our anxieties.

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of a substantial frontier settlement with Ranjít Singh, to whom the dissensions in Afghanistan afforded an opportunity of extending his territory across the Indus, of annexing Kashmir, and of building up the Sikh power with a solidity that kept it standing in alliance with the English for forty years.

Indirectly, however, the effects of all this premature diplomatic agitation were by no means unimportant or transitory. We have seen how French rivalry accelerated our earlier conquests; and how at a later time the correspondence of native princes with France, or the presence of French officers in the Indian armies, aroused English susceptibility. It has been shown how this furnished Lord Wellesley with the necessary leverage for driving onward his policy of bringing into subjection or subordinate alliance every Mahomedan or Maratha State that might cross our path toward undisputed predominance in the interior of India. In the same manner the intelligence of Napoleon's projects first diverted our attention from the sea-board to our land frontiers, and first launched the British Government upon that much larger expanse of Asiatic war and diplomacy in which it has ever since been, with intervals, engaged. Up to the end of the last century the field of Anglo-Indian politics had been circumscribed within the limits of India, being confined to our relations with the Indian States over which England was asserting an easy mastery, by the natural and necessary growth of her ascendancy. Now for the first time we entered upon that field of diplomacy in which all the countries of Western Asia, from Kábul to Constantinople, are surveyed as inter-

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posing barriers between Europe and our Indian possessions. The independence and integrity of these foreign and comparatively distant States are henceforward essential for the balance of Asiatic powers and for the security of our Indian frontiers. Up to this epoch the jar and collision of European contests had been felt only in our dealings with the inland powers of India; we struck down or disarmed every native ruler who attempted to communicate with our European enemies. But from the beginning of the nineteenth century we have had little or nothing to fear from Indian rivals, and we have gradually taken rank as a first-class Asiatic sovereignty. The vast weight of our Indian interests has ever since weighed decisively in the balance of our relations, not only with all Asia, but with any European State whose movements or dispositions might in any degree affect our position in the East. The chronic disquietude which began at this period has been the source of some hazardous military projects and premature diplomatic schemes, of two expeditions into Afghanistan, and of a policy that is constantly extending our protectorate far beyond the natural limits of India.

From the opening of the nineteenth century, then, may be dated the establishment of our undisputed ascendancy within India. From the same period also may be reckoned the appearance of that susceptibility regarding the possible approach of European rivals by land, which led first to negotiations and treaties, and eventually to wars, between England and the foreign States adjoining her Indian dominion.

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SECTION IV. *Internal Consolidation.*

So long as the European war lasted, the Anglo-Indian Government continued to survey watchfully all Western Asia, and to stand on its guard against any movement by land that might seem to affect or endanger our position. In the mean time, our naval superiority enabled us to sweep all enemies out of the Eastern waters, and to occupy any point from which the coasts or commerce of India might be exposed to molestation. The Cape of Good Hope, that important naval station half-way to India, was now finally seized; and in 1810 Lord Minto's expedition ejected the French from Java and Abercrombie captured the Mauritius; so that the sea-routes, the posts of shelter and supply, and the harbours, were all in our hands. At the beginning of the long peace which followed the termination of the great war in 1815 England had secured undisturbed possession of her enormously valuable conquests in the southern seas—of the Cape, of Ceylon, Java, and the Mauritius. All the foreign settlements on the Indian sea-board were disarmed; and of the States within India not one could now measure its strength against our power and resources. Six of the chief principalities were now bound to our system by the subsidiary treaties. In western and central India, Baroda, Poona, and Hyderabad, in south India, Mysore and Travancore, and towards the north-west, Oudh with a large number of minor chieftainships—were all under our suzerainty and protection. Beyond our frontiers were the growing kingdom of Ranjít Singh in the Punjab, and the Gúrkha State of Nepal along the

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southern slopes of the Himalayas. Only in central India there remained three principalities, surrounded by British territory, that had not yet come formally within the circle of our dominion. They belonged to the three families who still represented the fighting and predatory traditions of the Maratha confederacy, Sindia at Gwalior, Holkar at Indore, and the Bhonsla at Nagpore. To these may be added, though the status was different, the ruling house of the Guikwar at Baroda.

From the cessation of the great war that determined in our favour the contest with the native States for ascendancy in India we may also reckon the introduction of orderly administration within our territories, and of a systematic policy in regard to our neighbours, the recognition, in fact, of our imperial duties and obligations. The Mahomedan States of Hyderabad and Oudh were indebted for their survival to our protection; they would have been destroyed, but for our intervention, by fiercer and more vigorous rivals in the general scramble for dominion. Nevertheless it must be admitted that at times they had paid heavy salvage to us for their rescue. In some of our earlier transactions with them we had used the rough thoroughgoing methods of a stormy and dissolute period; and on emergencies their lands and revenues had been laid under severe contributions to our military expenditure. The time had now come when the British Government, no longer driven to these summary expedients by the struggle for existence, but drawing from its own possessions an ample and secure revenue, could regulate its dealings in civilized fashion by settled treaties, and

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could begin to adjust all its dealings with native States on the fair and equitable basis of their subordinate relationship.

So also we had now some leisure for looking into the condition of our domestic administration, and bringing into some kind of order the great provinces which had been recently acquired. The investigation of land-tenures, the institution of an elementary police, the first serious attempts to check the brigandage prevailing in our districts, the arrangement and supervision of the local courts of justice, took substantial form at the beginning of this century; the roots of that immense system of organized government which has since spread over all India were planted at this season of comparative tranquillity. The first five years of the nineteenth century were occupied with continuous wars, with great territorial changes, with the removal of landmarks, and the rearrangement of rulerships. But from that time forward the country under British jurisdiction has experienced immunity from foreign invasion or serious violation of its frontier, and even (except in 1857) from internal commotions. It may be questioned whether any State in Asia or even in Europe has enjoyed during the same period such complete political tranquillity.

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INDIA
1805.
Explanation
British Red
French Blue
Dutch Brown
Portuguese Green
Scale of English Miles.
100 0 100 200 300
70 E. Gr.
70
80
90
100
30
20
10
ARABIAN SEA
BAY OF BENGAL
HINDOOSTAN
THIBET
AFGHANISTAN
BALOOCHISTAN
PUNJAB
CASHMERE
NEPAUL
BHOTAN
ASSAM
BENGAL
ORISSA
BERAR
MALWA
GOOJERAT
CANDEISH
MYSORE
MALABAR
COROMANDEL
Laccadive Islands
Andaman Islands
Nicobar Islands
CEYLON
BOMBAY
HYDERABAD
MADRAS
Arcot
Pegu
Ava
Arracan
Chittagong
Mandalay
Zeneé
Lassa
Tsiangbo
Tamkar-sang
Batang
Tali-fu
Yun-nan-fu
Sadiya
Rungpoor
Dacca
Calcutta
Jaggernaut
Vizagapatam
Masulipatam
Pondicherry
Trincomalee
Point de Galle
Columbo
Negrais
Preparis I.
Great Coco
Port Andaman
Great Andaman
Little Andaman
Duncan's Passage
Cinque Is.
Car Nicobar
Ingeli R.
Irrawadi R.
Gulf of Martaban
Gulf of Siam
Salwen R.
Cambay
Gulf of Cutch
Gulf of Manar
Malabar Coast
Coromandel Coast
Hindoo Koosh Mts
Siah Koh
Suleimanee Mts
Indus R.
Sutlej R.
Ganges R.
Brahmapoot R.
Godavery R.
Kistna R.
Mahanaddy R.
Nerbudda R.
Taptee R.
Mahi R.
Sabermatty R.
Luni R.
Lun Mounts
L. Tengri
L. Nepang or Manassarowar
L. Pelte
Tsiamulun
Great Indian Desert
Sinde Desert
Western Ghauts
Eastern Ghauts
Vindhya Hills
Satpura Hills
Neelgherry Hills
Cardamum Hills
Ceylon Mts
Adam's Bridge
Palk's Passage
Pamban Passage
Ramree
Cheduba I.
Negrais
Bassein
Prome
Pegu
Martaban
Moulmein
Tavoy
Mergui
Junkseylon I.
Penang
Queda
Salang
Ligor
Sangora
Tenasserim
Meeanaung
Kyeikmayo
Kyaikkami
Kyaikkhami
Kyaikkhaw
Kyaikkhaw R.
Thatone
Thatone R.
Shabreing
Shoay-mau
Bamethayn R.
Moeliang
Tsiego
Kyaikkhaw
Kyaikkhaw R.
Kyaikkhaw
Kyaikkhaw R.
Kyaikkhaw
Kyaikkhaw R.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE GOVERNOR-GENERALSHIP OF LORD HASTINGS (1813–1823).

SECTION I. *Condition of Central India.*

SOME attempt has already been made to explain the views and circumstances under which, after Lord Wellesley's departure, the British Government determined to retire within its own administrative borders, to transact in future its political affairs upon the principle of limited liability, and to maintain, outside its actual obligations, the attitude of a placid spectator, unconcerned with the quarrels or misfortunes of his neighbours. It is a policy which from time immemorial a strong European State, placed in the midst of uncivilized rulers or races, has vainly endeavoured to uphold. It appears at first to be simple and prudent, to be dictated by enlightened self-interest and by public morality. Unfortunately it has hitherto invariably failed to do more than check or postpone for an interval the really inevitable tendency of an organized power to override, if not to absorb, loose tribal rulerships and ephemeral despotisms, which spring up and survive merely because

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more durable institutions are wanting and until they are supplied. Not only, indeed, is the check temporary, the reaction is apt to produce a rebound; a halt is followed by a great stride forward, a few steps taken backward look like preparation for a longer leap; so that masterly inactivity is attributed to astute calculation, and we are often unjustly accused in India of allowing the pear to rot that it may drop the easier into our hands. The truth is that in the art of political engineering solid construction depends on the material available and on the proper adaptation of resistance to natural pressure. It is as impossible to lay down a frontier on an untenable line as to throw a dam across a river on bad foundations. The dam is carried away at the next flood; nor will the strictest prudence long maintain a frontier or a system that does not run upon the natural lines of political or territorial permanency.

When, therefore, at the beginning of this century we drew back from what seemed to Lord Cornwallis a network of embarrassing ties and compromising guarantees, we retained, as has been said, certain great States within the sphere of our surveillance; but we left almost all central India, including Rájputana, to take care of itself. All round our own territories we drew a cordon of rigid irresistible order; while outside this ring-fence, in the great interior region that contained the principalities of the Maratha families and of the ancient Rájput chiefs, we allowed a free hand to Sindia, Holkar, and the predatory leaders. Scattered among the Maratha territories were a crowd of tribal chiefships and petty feudatories in various stages of dependence. Beyond

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the Maratha border, toward the great western desert, lay the Rájput States, too weak and disunited to oppose the exactions and dilapidations of great predatory armies. This group of primitive tribal chiefships, the last surviving relics of mediæval India, had outlasted the Afghan and the Moghul empires, and had weathered the tumultuous anarchy of the eighteenth century. But they were rent by intestine feuds, and the militia of the Rájput clans was quite incapable of resisting the trained bands of the Marathas or the Afghan mercenaries of Amír Khan. Some of these States were now remonstrating earnestly with the British Government for refusing to admit them within its protectorate, which they claimed as a matter of right. 'They said that some power in India had always existed to which peaceable States submitted, and in return obtained its protection against the invasions of upstart chiefs and the armies of lawless banditti; that the British Government now occupied the place of that protecting power, and was the natural guardian of weak States which were continually exposed to the cruelties and oppression of robbers and plunderers, owing to the refusal of the British Government to protect them[1].'

The principle of non-interference seems to have been defended upon the ground that all these jarring and complicated elements of disorder would gradually settle down and become fused into strong and solidly constituted states. But it soon became manifest that an attempt to confine epidemic disease within fixed areas in the midst of some populous country would be not

[1] Letter from Sir Charles Metcalfe, Resident for Rájputana, June, 1816.

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much more unreasonable than the plan of allowing political disorders to breed and multiply in the centre of India. For in the first place the Maratha chiefs were sullen, discontented, naturally ill-disposed towards the Government which had recently overthrown their predominance, and seeking by all means to repair and augment their military forces. Secondly, the enforcement of systematic order all round them, and of restriction within fixed boundaries, was irreconcilable with the conditions that had engendered their power and that were still necessary to its existence; for the Maratha princes could maintain large armies only by levying exactions from their neighbours and by constantly taking the field upon marauding excursions. And, thirdly, it was evident that the cessation of irregular warfare and the establishment of a steady protectorate over the greater portion of India must inevitably aggravate the sufferings and intensify the confusion in those parts where the supreme pacifying authority disclaimed jurisdiction, and formally abdicated every right of interference. Large bodies of troops were disbanded by the British Government and by its allies. But as all this multitude of men who lived by the sword and the free lance found their occupation gone within the pale of orderly government, they poured out of the pacified districts into the kingdoms of misrule like water draining from a cultivated upland into the low-lying marshes.

It was indeed impossible that a kind of political Alsatia, full of brigands and roving banditti, could be long tolerated in the midst of a country just settling down into the peaceful and industrious stage. Such a situation, never-

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theless, followed necessarily upon the introduction, by a sharp turn of policy, of the new principle. The British Government could not now stay at home and stand apart without stopping half-way in the pacification of India, and leaving one great homogeneous population under two different and entirely incompatible political systems. For although the Indian people are broken up into diversities of race and language, they are as a whole not less distinctly marked off from the rest of Asia by certain material and moral characteristics than their country is by the mountains and the sea. The component parts of that great country hang together, physically and politically; there is no more room for two irreconcilable systems of government than in Persia, China, or Asiatic Turkey. The attitude of insulation might not have been inconsistent in the infancy of the English dominion, when the forces of the native States were better divided and more equally balanced, and when we might have confined our enterprise to the establishment of a great maritime and commercial power on the shores of the Indian and Arabian seas, like the Phœnicians or the Venetians in the Mediterranean. But it has been seen that during the second half of the eighteenth century we penetrated inland, striking in among the local wars and seizing territory, in order to protect ourselves and forestall the French. Then before the last apprehensions of French rivalry had vanished we had been confronted by the Marathas and the Mysore rulers, whose natural jealousy of our rising power was abetted by the French, and whose well-appointed armies directly threatened our position.

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To meet this danger Lord Wellesley had organized subsidiary forces on a large scale, undertaking on the part of the British Government the general defence of all States that submitted to our political influence, and confining within fixed boundaries all those that held aloof. Lastly, when Mysore and the Maratha confederacy—the two powers that made head against us—had been the one destroyed and the other disabled, our own ascendancy had so overshadowed all India that it was too late to descend from the height we had attained, or to stand still abruptly on the road to universal dictatorship. We had now become a conquering power, we had assumed a continental sovereignty; and upon us the duty of providing the police of India had manifestly fallen. When we attempted to disclaim it no one else could undertake the business; and the smaller chiefships, who saw themselves spoiled and devoured, protested against a Government that had pre-occupied the imperial place but evaded the imperial obligation.

In the mean time the condition of the whole central region was sinking from bad to worse. It has been seen that in the eighteenth century India was crowded with mercenary soldiers who followed the trade of war; and an incredibly large proportion of the population subsisted by freebooting, a flourishing profession that had now been openly practised in India for several generations. This freebooting class, whose occupation was disappearing with the contraction of that field of private enterprise, had collected in central India, where, instead of diminishing and settling down, as had been expected, they increased to an alarming degree. The swarming of the

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predatory bands, which had been a comparatively transient and occasional evil when they could range over the whole Indian continent, became a mortal plague when it was hemmed in within set bounds, for the inland countries were exhausted by endemic brigandage. While the lesser principalities were thus being systematically bled to death, the great military chiefs were recruiting their forces, replenishing their treasuries, and enlarging the range of their operations, not without some prospect of recovering the formidable military footing which they had lost in the previous war.

The subsidiary system, moreover, had other consequences besides those of causing the disbanding of the loose mercenary militia and the condensation of the free-booting plague. As the military power of the States which contracted these treaties was conveyed into British hands, the result was to weaken the internal authority of their rulers, by diminishing their feeling of responsibility for governing well and moderately, because they were sure of our protection in the event of attack or revolt. In this manner the burden of repressing disorder within the allied States followed the transfer of the duty of external defence, and became gradually shifted on to the shoulders of the British Government. Our policy might vary, backward or forward; we still found ourselves mounting step by step up to the high office of ultimate arbiter in every dispute and supreme custodian of the peace of all India.

Under the circumstances that have just been described, the marauding bands of central India, like the Free Companies of mediæval Europe, had prospered and multiplied; until, in 1814, Amír Khan, a notable military

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adventurer, was living upon Rájputana with a compact army of at least 30,000 men and a strong artillery. That a regular army of this calibre should have been moving at large about central India, entirely unconnected with any recognisable government or fixed territory, acknowledging no political or civil responsibility, is decisive evidence of the prevailing disorganization. But Amír Khan's troops were under some kind of discipline: they were employed upon a system in some degree resembling regular warfare, their commander's aim being to carve out a dominion for himself. The true Pindári hordes had no other object but general rapine; they were immense bands of mounted robbers; their most popular leader, Cheetoo, could number no less than 10,000 horsemen; they could only subsist by irruptions into rich and fertile districts, and they were a perpetual menace to the country possessed or protected by the British power. It cannot be doubted that they maintained a secret understanding with the independent Maratha rulers at Poona, Nagpore, and Gwalior, who were not particularly anxious to join in the suppression of armed bodies that spared Maratha districts while they harried British lands and the Nizám's country, and who probably remembered that in any future attempt to make head against British domination the Pindáris might prove very serviceable auxiliaries.

Section II. *The Nepal War* (1814–1816).

The war that broke out in 1814 with Nepal had inspired the Marathas with some hope of finding their

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opportunity in our difficulties. About 1768 a chief of the Gúrkhalis or Gúrkhas—who are a race issuing out of the intermixture of Hindus from the plains with the hill tribes—had subdued all the highlands and valleys on the southern slopes of the Himalayas overlooking Bengal. His successors had carried their arms north-westwards along the mountain-ranges above Oudh, Rohilcund, and the provinces watered by the Ganges and the Jumna, up to the confines of the Punjab. The kingdom thus established was not under a single ruler, it was in the hands of a group of high military officers belonging to the dominant clan, who kept the legitimate Rája in subjection and governed Nepal in his name. As their soldiery were drilled and equipped in European fashion—for in military matters the Gúrkhas have always been skilful copyists from the English model—they rapidly subdued and extirpated the petty hill States, and soon began to make encroachments upon the sub-Himalayan English lowlands. Between the minor chiefs who lived on the skirts of the mountains and the great proprietors in the plains immediately below there had been chronic fighting from time immemorial; but now the Gúrkhas had subdued all the highlands and the English had brought the low country under their authority. It followed that the constant quarrels over this debateable border soon embroiled the two governments. The Nepalese officers on the frontier encroached audaciously upon the lands of English subjects, occupied tracts belonging to Bengal, and refused to retire. At last, in 1814, when they seized two districts, Lord Hastings sent to their government a peremptory demand that they should evacuate, which was answered by

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an open attack upon our frontier-posts and the slaughter of our police. The Gúrkhas, after holding a formal council, had resolved upon war, being persuaded that the English could never penetrate into their mountains.

Then ensued the first of those numerous expeditions into the interior of the great hill-ranges surrounding India, in which the Anglo-Indian Government has ever since been at intervals engaged. The frontier which was to be the scene of war stretched a distance of about six hundred miles, and the enemy had the command of all the passes leading up into the highlands. The attack was made by the English at three separate points; and although General Gillespie was repulsed and killed in attempting to storm a fort, yet in spite of a brave and obstinate resistance our troops gained their footing within the hills, and drove the Gúrkhas out of all their positions on the west. The Nepalese government was compelled to sign a treaty ceding a long strip of the lower Himalayas, with most of the adjacent forest lands, extending from the present western frontier of the Nepal State north-westward as far as the Sutlej river. All the hill-country that now overhangs Rohilcund and the North-West Provinces up to the Jumna river thus fell into our hands. The Anglo-Indian frontier was carried up to and beyond the watershed of the highest mountains separating India from Tibet or from Kathay; and the English dominion thus became conterminous for the first time with the Chinese Empire, whose government has ever since observed our proceedings with marked and intelligible solicitude.

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SECTION III. *The Peshwa and the Pindári War* (1816-1818).

In the mean time the freebooting bands of central India were increasing in numbers and audacity. The Pindáris, who were openly disowned and secretly encouraged by the Maratha chiefs, had made an inroad into certain districts of the Madras Presidency, carrying off great booty; they had also plundered on the frontier of Bengal. Amír Khan, the Pathán leader, was besieging Jeypore, whose Rája applied for succour to the English. After much negotiation Lord Hastings succeeded not only in bringing the Rájput State of Jeypore within the English protectorate, but also in concluding a subsidiary treaty with the Bhonsla Rája of Nagpore, whereby an important member was detached from the Maratha confederation. But this Rája soon repented an engagement which affected his complete independence; and under the influence of a party at his capital hostile to the English, he began to correspond secretly with the Peshwa at Poona, who had become restless, disaffected, and exceedingly impatient of British mediation in his dealings with feudatories or neighbouring States. The Peshwa began to assemble his troops and collect military stores; the British Resident replied by calling in the subsidiary force; and a kind of sporadic insurrection, privily fomented by the Poona authorities, was breaking out in the country. However, just as a rupture became imminent the Peshwa realized his danger. He signed, in 1816, a treaty making cessions of territory in exchange for an increased subsidiary force, and

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renouncing virtually all pretensions to supremacy in the Maratha confederation.

Lord Hastings now decided that the time had come when he could begin his combined operations for the suppression of the freebooting hordes, and for such a general reformation of the condition of central India as might eradicate the predatory system. His plan was to mark out the whole of this confused tract into recognised rulerships, so that no part of it should be left outside the jurisdiction of some responsible authority. He relied on the supreme influence and paramount power of the British Government to insist, when this had been done, upon the pacification of the whole country through the chiefs to whom it should have been in severalty assigned. He projected, in short, the consummation of the work that had been begun by Lord Cornwallis, and carried very far by Lord Wellesley—the extension of our supremacy and protectorate over every native State in the interior of India.

In such a cause, however, the hearty co-operation of the Maratha princes could not reasonably be expected. Amír Khan, the Pathán leader, was persuaded to disband his army and to settle down on the lands guaranteed to him. But Sindia agreed reluctantly to associate himself with the campaign against the Pindáris, and delayed the departure of his troops with the manifest purpose of watching events. The Peshwa, galled by the yoke which the recent treaty had fixed upon him, broke out into open hostility, attacking the British troops at Poona [1]; while at

[1] October, 1817. See a picturesque description, by an eye-witness,

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Nagpore the Rája declared for him as the head of the Maratha nation, and sent his own troops against the British Residency. On both occasions the Marathas were repulsed, though not without stout fighting at Nagpore; and as Holkar's army, which attempted to join the Peshwa, had been defeated at Mehidpore, the opposition of the Maratha powers to the Governor-General's policy of pacification soon came to an end. The Peshwa, pursued by the British flying columns, fought one or two sharp actions; but his troops were at last scattered, his forts were taken, and he himself was pursued until he finally surrendered upon an assurance of suitable provision[1]. Lord Hastings had determined to exclude him and his family from any further share of influence or dominion in the Dekhan; and the greater part of his territories passed under the British sovereignty. The Nagpore State had also to cede several important districts; but the Satára State was reconstituted under the descendant of Sivaji, and the important group of Rájput chiefships, with a number of minor principalities, were placed under the immediate protection and guarantee of the British Government. The tributes claimed from the lesser States by the Maratha rulers were fixed and confirmed, upon the condition that payment should be made through the British treasury.

By these measures the Maratha rulership of the Peshwa was now finally extinguished, and the three leading

of this action in Grant Duff's *History of the Marathas*, vol. iii. ch. 18.

[1] June, 1818.

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families that had so often opposed us—Sindia, Holkar, and the Bhonsla of Nagpore—were definitely bound over to keep the peace of India. The Pindáris, who were merely the remnants of the once flourishing predatory system, the dregs of the roving bands that had harried India during a century of anarchy, were dispersed or exterminated. The Maratha States were shut up within carefully demarcated limits; the trades of marauding conquest and of mere brigandage on a large scale alike disappeared; the whole species vanished with the change of those conditions of government and society by which it had been engendered. Henceforward it became the universal principle of public policy that every State in India (outside the Punjab and Sinde) should make over the control of its foreign relations to the British Government, should submit all external disputes to British arbitration, and should defer to British advice regarding internal management so far as might be necessary to cure disorders or scandalous misrule. A British Resident was appointed to the courts of all the greater princes as the agency for the exercise of these high functions; while the subsidiary forces and the contingents furnished by the States placed the supreme military command everywhere under British direction.

This great political settlement of central India—the disarmament and pacification of the military chiefships, and the adjustment of distinct relations of supremacy and subordination—established universal recognition of the cardinal principle upon which the fabric of British dominion in India has been built up. The last shadow of interference by any European rival had now for the

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time faded away. The contest with the native States for ascendancy was finally decided, and the right of intervention for the security and tranquillity of the Indian people was now everywhere acknowledged, from the two seas northward up to Sinde and the Sutlej river. From the Sinde frontier on the west right round the peninsula eastward to the frontier of Burmah, the whole coast-line of the peninsula was under our authority; we held a long belt of the Himalayan highlands on the north, and our political jurisdiction extended to the western edge of the deserts bordering on the Indus. The largest, most important, and by far the most valuable portion of this region was now under our direct administration; the rest was under our sovereign influence. Thus on two sides our empire had already touched the natural barriers of India, the ocean and the mountains; on a third it was covered by the cis-Indus desert. The only side upon which our frontier was still unstable and liable to disturbance was to the north-west, where the Sikh kingdom beyond the Sutlej had acquired formidable fighting strength under Ranjít Singh.

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CHAPTER XVII.

COMPLETION OF DOMINION (1823–1849).

SECTION I. *From the Burmese War to the Second Punjab War.*

UP to this epoch the scene of all the East India Company's wars has been within India; and for the last fifty years—from the withdrawal of the French in 1763 to the end of the Pindári war in 1818—our antagonists have been the native Indian powers. As the expansion of our dominion carried us so much nearer to foreign Asiatic countries, our rapid approach to the geographical limits of India proper discovered for us fresh complications, and we were now on the brink of collision with new races. The first non-Indian power that provoked us to actual hostility had been the Gúrkha chiefship; but as Nepal lies on the southern slopes of the Himalayas its population belongs, by blood and religion, for the most part to Hinduism. The second non-Indian State that challenged us from beyond the Indian frontier was the kingdom of a people differing entirely from Indian races, the Burmese.

It is a remarkable coincidence that during the first fifty years occupied by the rise of the English dominion in India, other rulerships were being founded simul-

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taneously, by a not dissimilar process, around us. In the course of that period (1757–1805) the tribes of Afghanistan had been collected into subjection to one kingdom under the dynasty of Ahmed Shah; the petty chiefships, Hindu and Mahomedan, of the Punjab had been welded into a military despotism by the strong hand of Ranjít Singh; and the Rájas on the lower highlands of the Himalayas had submitted to the domination of Nepal. Lastly, about the time when Clive was subduing Bengal, a Burmese military leader had established by conquest a rulership which had its capital in the plains traversed by the Irawadi river and its principal affluents, from the upper waters of those rivers down to the sea. The kingdom of Burmah, founded in 1757 by Alompra's subjugation of Pegu, now included not only the open tracts about the Irawadi and the Salwen—extending from the hills out of which these rivers issue to the low-lying sea-coast at their mouths—it also stretched far southward down the eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal. It was absorbing all the mountainous region overhanging the eastern land frontier of India; and the Burmese armies were pressing westward across the watershed of those mountains through the upland country about the Brahmaputra towards the great alluvial plains of Eastern Bengal. There had consequently been frequent disputes on that border between the Anglo-Indian and the Burmese authorities, for the dividing line was unsettled and variable, and on both sides the landmarks had been unavoidably set forward in pioneering fashion, until they were separated only by strips of semi-dependent tribal lands and spheres

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of influence from which each party desired to exclude the other. It will be remembered that along all the ranges of the mountains that cut off the Indian plains from the rest of the Asiatic continent, there runs an unbroken fringe of rugged highlands, inhabited by tribes of mixed origin who are more or less warlike and independent.

In this situation it has always been the policy of the English in India, as of other civilized empires in contact with barbarism, to maintain the zone of tribal lands as a barrier or quickset hedge against intruders upon their frontier, by taking the little border States or headships under their protection. The first Burmese war began, like several of our Indian wars, over a violation of this protectorate. The Burmese were engaged in annexing the country in the north-east of what is now the Anglo-Indian province of Assam, and around Manipur; they were making inroads into Cachar, then under British protection, and threatening the Bengal district of Sylhet. Beside other minor encroachments and breaches of international law, they had seized an island belonging to the British on the coast of Aracan; and, having never measured themselves against civilized forces, they saw no reason why they should stop before they had fairly tried their neighbour's capacity to resist them.

The war that ensued (1824–1826) resulted in the first extension of British dominion across the geographical frontiers of India into an entirely different country. The expedition sent by Lord Amherst, then Governor-General, to Pegu represents the first campaign under-

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taken by Anglo-Indian troops on the Asiatic continent beyond India. It ascended the course of the Irawadi; and the Burmese, after an obstinate defence, were compelled to submit to our terms. The annexation of Aracan and the Tenasserim provinces not only placed in English hands almost all that part of the coast which fronts India across the Bay of Bengal—it brought for the first time a non-Indian people within the jurisdiction of the Indian empire. A secondary but important consequence of the defeat of the Burmese was their recognition of our protectorate over Upper Assam, Cachar, and Manipur, the tract beyond Bengal and along the Brahmaputra river which is now incorporated within the great north-eastern Chief-Commissionership of Assam.

The acquisitions made by the Burmese war had thus effectually sealed up and secured our eastern frontier, as the Gúrkha war had quieted the only State that could molest us along the line of the north-eastern Himalayas. In 1826, when a usurper had seized the Bhurtpore chiefship, Lord Combermere took by assault the strong fortress of Bhurtpore, before which Lord Lake had failed in 1805. Within India there now remained no more than two sovereign powers, the English and the Sikhs; for the Amírs of Sinde scarcely fell within the category of Indian rulers. Ranjít Singh, under whom the Sikh domination in the Punjab reached its climax early in this century, had acquiesced, after some indications of hostility, in the policy of maintaining friendly relations with the British Government. He had consequently signed in 1809 a treaty that confined his territory to the north and west of

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the Sutlej river, which now divided the two States; and this arrangement preserved unbroken for nearly forty years the peace of our northern frontier. Beyond the Punjab, however, on the further side of the Afghan mountains, there were movements that were reviving in India the ever sensitive apprehensions of insecurity. The march of Russia across Asia, suspended by the Napoleonic wars, had latterly been resumed; her pressure was felt throughout all the central regions from the Caspian Sea to the Oxus; and by the treaty of Turcomantchai (1828) she had established a preponderant influence over Persia. A few years later the Shah of Persia, who claimed western Afghanistan as belonging of right to his crown, was preparing for an attack upon Herat, the chief frontier city of the Afghans on that side and the key to all routes leading from Persia into India. Some of the leading Afghan Sirdars were in correspondence with the Persian king; and Shah Soojah, the hereditary prince, who had been driven out by the new Afghan dynasty, was an exile in the Punjab, whence he made unsuccessful attempts to recover his throne, soliciting aid both from the Sikhs and the English. Shah Soojah represented the legitimate descendants of Ahmed Shah Abdallee, who had created the Afghan kingdom, but a few years before this time his family had been supplanted by the sons of a powerful minister. This is a well-known form of dynastic changes in Asia, produced by the natural tendency of rulership to fall out of the hands of those who cannot keep it into the grasp of those who can. It will be remembered that the royal house of the Maratha empire had been evicted in the 18th century by a ministerial dynasty, the Peshwas;

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and in the present century a precisely similar revolution has taken place in Nepal.

The cardinal point of the whole Asiatic question was now becoming fixed in Afghanistan. From its situation, its natural strength, its high strategic value, this country has been always a position of the highest importance to the rulers of India, and the claims of Persia brought it prominently upon the political foreground. The British Government at home laid down the principle, big with momentous consequence, that the independence and integrity of Afghanistan are essential to the security of India; while missions from India had already explored the Indus and been received by the Amír Dost Mohamed at Kábul. When, therefore, the Shah of Persia in person, attended by some Russian officers, led an army in 1837 against Herat, and when the Afghan Amír, disappointed in his hopes of an English alliance, was negotiating with a Russian agent, it will be easily understood that all the elements of alarm and mistrust drew speedily to a head. In London the ministers declared that 'the welfare of our Eastern possessions require that we shall have on our western frontier an ally interested in resisting aggression, in the place of chiefs ranging themselves in subservience to a hostile power.' 'A crisis,' wrote Lord Auckland from Simla, 'has now arrived in Afghanistan, which imperiously demands the interference of the British Government.' The Governor-General proceeded to conclude a tripartite treaty, by which the British Government and Ranjít Singh covenanted with Shah Soojah to reinstate him in Afghanistan by force of arms; and in 1838 a

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British army marched through Sinde up the Belúch passes to Kandahar.

This, then, was the position of the English dominion in India at the opening of Queen Victoria's memorable reign. The names of our earlier allies and enemies—of the Nizám, Oudh, the Maratha princes, and the Mysore State—were still writ large on the map, but they had fallen far into the rear of our onward march; while in front of us were only Ranjít Singh, ruling the Punjab up to the Afghan hills, and the Sinde Amírs in the Indus valley. The curtain was just rising upon the first act of the long drama, not yet in our own time played out, of central Asian politics. What did this new departure imply? Not that we had any quarrel with the Afghans, from whom we were separated by the five rivers whose floods unite in the Indus. It meant that after half a century's respite the English were again coming into contact with a rival European influence on Asiatic ground; and that whereas in the previous century they had only to fear that rivalry on the sea-coast, they now had due notice of its approach overland, from beyond the Oxus and the Paropamisus.

The story of our first campaign in Afghanistan is well known. Shah Soojah was easily replaced on the throne, and the English remained in military occupation of the country round Kábul and Kandahar for about two years. But the whole plan had been ill-conceived politically, and from a strategic point of view the expedition had been rash and dangerous. The base of our operations for this invasion of Afghanistan lay in Sinde, a foreign State under rulers not well affected towards the English;

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while on our flank, commanding all the communications with India, lay the Punjab, another foreign State, with a numerous army watching our proceedings with vigilant jealousy. Such a position was in every way so untenable, the advance movement was so obviously premature, that no one need wonder at the lamentable failure which ended our first attempt to extend the British protectorate beyond the limits of India. After the disastrous retreat of the British troops from Kábul in the winter of 1841–2, and the recapture of the city by General Pollock in the following autumn, we withdrew our forces, evacuated the country, and abandoned the enterprise.

In 1843, nevertheless, we made another step forward, and the dynasty of the Sinde Amírs fell before our arms. The causes of the war do not justify Lord Ellenborough and Sir Charles Napier, who are responsible for making it; the results were to transfer the lower Indus valley to the British Government, and, by placing us in possession of the Indus estuary, to bring under our control the whole unbroken circuit of the Indian sea-coast.

Three years later, in 1846, came the inevitable collision between the Sikh army and the British troops on the banks of the Sutlej river. After Ranjít Singh's death (1839) no successor appeared who could manage the fierce soldiery with whom he had conquered the Punjab and driven the Afghans from Peshawar. His reputed son, Sher Singh, who succeeded to the throne, was very soon murdered; the chiefs and ministers who endeavoured to govern after Sher Singh's death were removed by internecine strife, mutinous outbreaks, and assassinations. The

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Sikh State was on the verge of dissolution by anarchy, for all power had passed into the hands of committees of regimental officers appointed by an army that was wild with religious ardour, and furiously suspicious of its own leaders. The Queen-mother, Ranjít Singh's widow, and her infant son Dhuleep Singh, were recognised as nominal representatives of the reigning house; but they were liable at any moment to be consumed by the next irruption of sanguinary caprice, and their only hope of preservation lay in finding some outlet abroad for the forces which had reduced the Sikh State to violent internal anarchy. For this purpose it was manifestly their interest to launch their turbulent army across the Sutlej against the English, into a collision that would certainly weaken and probably destroy it. The military leaders were not blind to the motives with which they were encouraged to march upon the English frontier; but their patriotism had been excited by rumours of the advance of the British army, for the Governor-General (Sir Henry Hardinge), fearing some disorderly irruption, was bringing up troops to reinforce his outposts. When, therefore, the Sikh soldiers were taunted with questions whether they would tamely submit to European domination, they answered by crossing the frontier-river into British territory, and in December 1845 they were met by the British army. On our side the preparations were incomplete; we had undervalued both the strength and the activity of the enemy; and we had been so long accustomed to easy victories on the open plains of India that the resolute defence of their field-entrenchments made by the Sikhs, and their well-served artillery, took us by surprise. In

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the first battle, at Moodkee, we paid dearly for our success; and three days later, at Ferozshah, began the most bloody and obstinate contest ever fought by Anglo-Indian troops, at the end of which they remained barely masters of their camping ground, in a situation of imminent peril from the approach of the Sikh reserve forces under Tej Singh. But the English maintained a bold front; Tej Singh retired; and, in the two battles that followed the Sikhs, fighting hardily and fiercely, were driven back across the Sutlej and compelled to abandon further resistance in the field. The Governor-General occupied Lahore in February 1846 with 20,000 men; Ranjít Singh's infant son was placed on the throne under English tutelage; some cessions of territory were exacted; the Sikh army was reduced; and for two years the Punjab was administered as a State under the general superintendence and protection of the British Government.

But the expedient of placing the machinery of native government under temporary European superintendence can succeed only when the irresistible authority of the superintending power is universally felt and recognised. The system is unstable because it does not pretend to permanence; it lacks the direct and weighty pressure required to keep down the smouldering elements of military revolt. Although the Sikhs were in number not more than one-sixth of the population of the Punjab, they were united by the recollection of rulership; and the fighting men, who were justly proud of having played an even match against the English, were not yet inclined to settle down again to peaceful agriculture. At the Lahore court intrigue and

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jealousies prevailed; and in the outlying districts there was more than one focus of discontent. In April 1848 the assassination at Multán of two British officers was the signal for an insurrection that led to a general rising of the military classes, a reassemblage of the old *Khálsa* Sikh army, and a second trial of strength with the British troops. At Chilianwála (January 1849) the English general, who displayed very little tactical skill, lost 2,400 men and officers before he won the day; but at Goojerat (February 1849) the Sikh army, after a stubborn combat, was at last overthrown by so shattering a defeat that the English were left undisputed masters of the whole country. That Lord Dalhousie, after mature deliberation, determined against renewing the precarious experiment of a protected native rulership in the Punjab, must now be acknowledged to have been fortunate; for if there had been a great independent State across the Sutlej when our own sepoys revolted, eight years later, the Sikhs might have found the opportunity difficult to resist. The Governor-General's proclamation of 1849, which annexed the Punjab to the British crown, carried our territorial frontier across the Indus right up to the base of the Afghan hills, finally extinguished the long rivalship of the native Indian powers, and absorbed under our sovereignty the last kingdom that remained outside the pale of British empire in India.

After this manner, therefore, and with the full concurrence of the English nation as expressed through its Parliament, have successive Governors-General pushed on during the nineteenth century by forced marches to

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complete dominion in India, fulfilling Lord Clive's prophecy and disproving his forebodings. The long resistance to our universal supremacy culminated and ended in the bloody but decisive campaigns against the Sikh army. The mutiny of 1857 was the natural and (in Asia) the familiar sequel of an unusually protracted war time, when the total cessation of fighting and the general pacification of the whole country left an insubordinate mercenary army idle and restless. From 1838 to 1848 hostilities had been intermittent but incessantly recurring; the sepoys had been in the field against the Afghans, the Belúchis of Sinde, the Maratha insurgents of Gwalior, and the Sikhs of the Punjab. In 1852–53 they were engaged in the second expedition against the Burmese; for Lord Dalhousie had scarcely reduced the Punjab and planted the British standard at Peshawar, when he became involved in the disputes with the Court at Ava which led to the annexation of Lower Burmah. Except in the calamitous retreat from Kábul in 1841–42, where a whole division was lost, the Anglo-Indian troops had been constantly victorious; but in Asia a triumphant mercenary army, like the Janissaries or the Mamelukes, almost always becomes ungovernable so soon as it becomes stationary. All India was, the Bengal sepoys imagined, at their feet; while in 1856 the annexation of Oudh, which was the province that furnished most of our recruits, touched their pride and affected their interests; so when the greased cartridges roused their caste prejudices they turned against their employers.

In suppressing the wild fanatic outbreak of 1857 we were compelled to sweep away the last shadows, that had long

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lost substance, of names and figures once illustrious and formidable in India. The phantom of a Moghul emperor and his court vanished from Delhi; the last pretender to the honours of the Maratha Peshwa disappeared from Cawnpore; the direct government of all our Indian territories passed from the Company to the Crown in 1858. The supremacy of that government now stands uncontested, in opinion and sentiment as well as in fact, throughout the whole dominion. The extinction of the last vestige of dynastic opposition or rivalry has been the signal for the beginning of a modern phase of political life, for the complete recognition of our Indian empire, and for the formation within the State of parties which, however they may differ in administrative views, aspirations, and aims, are united in loyalty to the English crown.

At the present moment, therefore, Her Majesty the Queen-Empress surveys all India united under her sovereignty, whether directly administered, or through allied and friendly princes. The whole of Burmah has come under her sceptre; Belúchistan has been included within our protectorate; our railways run up to the southern marches of Afghanistan within seventy miles of Kandahar; and Afghanistan itself is now encircled by external frontiers that England has pledged herself by public engagement to defend. The successful demarcation of the north-western borders of the territories of the Afghan Amír will associate Lord Dufferin's viceroyalty with an epoch in the political history of Central Asia. The boundary pillars set up in 1888 by British

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and Russian officers along the slopes of the Paropamisus up to the Oxus river record the first deliberately concerted attempts made by Russia and Great Britain to stave off the contact of their incessantly expanding Asiatic empires. Our political frontiers now touch on the north-west the limits of Russian possessions or protectorates; on the north they adjoin Kashgar, ruled from across half Asia by Pekin; while in the south-east they are in contact with the Chinese province of Yunan, and with the outlying tracts into which the French are advancing from Annam.

What is the chief and manifest consequence of this renewed approximation of the European powers in Asia? The isolation of India from the winds and currents of European politics must now cease altogether and finally. She is drifting rapidly within the recognised sphere of European diplomacy; the enlargement of her borders has become a matter of European concern, and henceforward her external policy and her military establishment must be necessarily regulated upon European rather than upon Asiatic considerations. In the place of the jealousies of commercial companies, instead of desultory wars between rival settlements or against native princes, we have the greatest military powers of the world—Russia, France and England—feeling their way towards each other across wide deserts, difficult mountain ranges, and the debateable lands that skirt the Oxus in the north or the Cambodia river on the far south-east of our dominion. To those, indeed, who demand permanency for territorial borders in Asia it may have been instructive to follow, throughout the

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events and transactions rapidly sketched in the foregoing pages, the adventures of successive Anglo-Indian governments in search of a stable and scientifically defensible land frontier. We have usually begun by projecting a political border-line, by interposing, that is, some protected State between our real territories and the power beyond them, whose approach seemed to threaten our security. But the result of this manœuvre has been too often to accelerate our own extension, because we have found ourselves eventually forced to advance up to any line that our rivals could not be permitted to overstep. Nor can anything illustrate more signally the radical and inherent mutability, the accidental and elastic character, of all territorial and political settlements in Asia, than the fact that at this moment our statesmen are still in quest of that promised border-land whose margin seems to fade for ever as we follow it.

Section II. *Conclusion.*

The object of this short and necessarily very inadequate sketch has been to explain the combination of determining causes and events, in Europe as much as in Asia, that have brought England to ascendancy in India. The explanation is, in the present writer's opinion, not difficult; but the result is none the less singular; for there is in political history no precedent for the present situation of our Indian empire, and people still ask whether good or ill will come of it. When Sir James Mackintosh remarked that England lost a great dominion in North America in 1783 and had won

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another in India by 1805, he added that it was still uncertain whether the former was any real loss, or the latter any permanent gain. Mr. Spencer Walpole, a much later authority upon the history of England, inclines towards the view that in the end nothing will have been gained. 'Centuries hence,' he writes, 'some philosophic historian . . . will relate the history of the British in India as a romantic episode which has had no appreciable effect upon the progress of the human family[1].' Upon this it may be observed that whatever may be the eventual advantage to England from her possession of India (of the immediate advantage there can be little doubt), it seems already plain that the effect upon the general progress of the human family must be very great. That one of the foremost nations of western Europe—foremost as harbinger of light and liberty—should have established a vast empire in Asia, is an accomplished fact which must necessarily give an enormous impulse and a totally new direction to the civilization of that continent. It will be remembered that since the Roman empire began to decline civilization has not been spreading eastward; on the contrary, in Asia it has distinctly receded; it was driven out and so fundamentally uprooted by the Mahomedans that the long dominion of Rome in Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor has left very little beyond names and ruins. On the other hand the exceedingly slow advance of new ideas and social changes among the Oriental races proves the strength of resistance possessed by barbarism entrenched behind the unchanging conditions of Asiatic existence. The

[1] *History of England*, vol. v. p. 433.

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only important ground in Asia recovered for centuries by civilization has been won in India by the English.

But if civilization barely goes forward in Asia, it is at least not likely again to go back. The forces which broke up in earlier times the higher political organizations, which thrust back the higher religion, no longer exist; neither the fighting power of Asia, nor her fanatic enthusiasm, is now in the least formidable to Europe. Not only is it certain that Asia lies at the mercy of the military strength of Europe, but in all the departments of thought and action she is far inferior. In these circumstances European progress is never likely to suffer another great repulse at the hands of Oriental reaction; and the English dominion, once firmly planted in Asia, is not likely to be shaken unless it is supplanted by a stronger European rival. Henceforward the struggle will be, not between the Eastern and Western races, but between the great commercial and conquering nations of the West for predominance in Asia. From this contest England has now little to fear; and in the mean time we have undertaken the intellectual emancipation of the Indian people; we are changing the habits of thought, the religious ideas, the moral level of the whole country. No one can as yet venture upon any prognostic of the course which the subtle and searching mind of India will mark out for itself amid the cross-currents of Eastern and Western influences. But we may be sure that diffusion of knowledge and changes of material environment are acting steadily on mental habits, and that future historians will have a second remarkable illustration of the

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force with which a powerful and highly organized civilization can mould the character and shape the destinies of many millions of people[1]. And whatever may be the ultimate destiny of our Indian empire, we shall have conferred upon the Indians great and permanent benefits, and shall have left a good name for ourselves in history.

[1] 'I confess that my own imagination is most powerfully excited by the visible connexion between moral influence and material authority which is presented, to an extent never realized before or since, by the phenomenon of the Roman empire.'—Merivale's *History of the Romans under the Empire*, vol. vii, Preface.

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